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THE
REFUTATION
OF
NONCONFORMITY

ON ITS OWN PROFESSED PRINCIPLE;

OR,

A CHURCH NOT EPISCOPAL, NOT SCRIPTURAL,

AND SEPARATION OF BRITISH PROTESTANTS FROM THE

CHURCH OF ENGLAND, A VIOLATION OF THE

DIVINE WILL;

AND

THE SUPPORT OF THAT CHURCH

THE RELIGIOUS DUTY OF GOVERNMENT IN PREFERENCE TO ALL

OTHER PROTESTANT SOCIETIES AT PRESENT INSTITUTED.

BY

THE REV. E. C. KEMP, M.A.

*Rector of Whissonsett, Norfolk, and Domestic Chaplain to
His Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge.*

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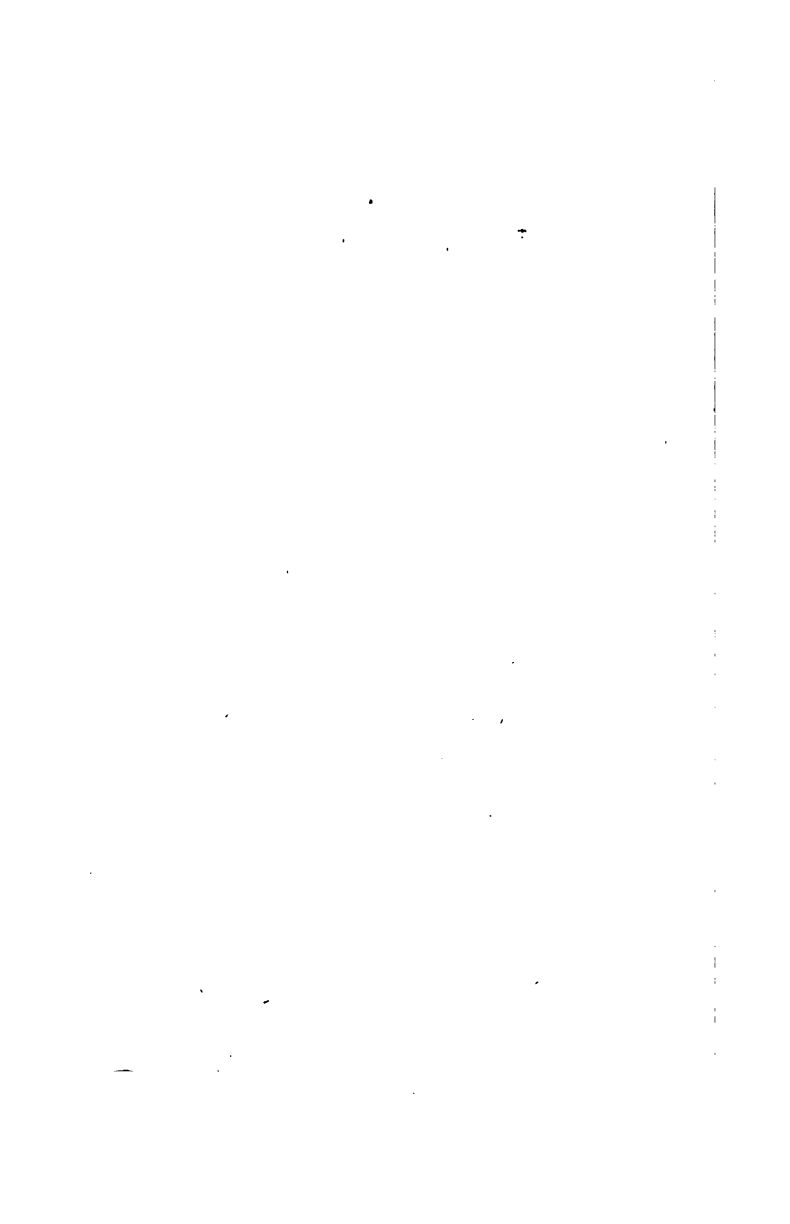
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TO
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
SIR GEORGE HENRY ROSE, G.C.H., D.C.L.,
 &c. &c. &c.
LATE HIS BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S
REPRESENTATIVE AT THE COURT OF BERLIN,
AS A TRIBUTE NOT ONLY OF RESPECT
FOR BRILLIANT TALENTS AND VARIED ACCOMPLISHMENTS,
BUT ALSO OF VENERATION
FOR THE MOST UNIMPEACHABLE INTEGRITY
IN POLITICAL AS WELL AS CIVIL LIFE;
THE MOST ZEALOUS AND MUNIFICENT PATRONAGE
OF WORKS OF PIETY AND BENEVOLENCE;
AND
FOR THAT ARDENT PURSUIT OF CHRISTIANITY
SO INDISPENSABLY REQUISITE
TO ALL TRUE NOBILITY OF CHARACTER,
THE FOLLOWING TREATISE
IS,
WITH HIS VERY KIND PERMISSION,
GRATEFULLY DEDICATED
BY THE AUTHOR.



ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS Treatise is primarily addressed to Dr. John Pye Smith, Mr. Josiah Conder, the reputed editor of the *Patriot* Newspaper and of the *Eclectic Review*, and the undoubted author of a work entitled "On Protestant Nonconformity;" Mr. Thomas Binney, Mr. John Angell James, and other educated sectarian teachers; together with those of their congregations who are desirous of instruction in righteousness. The author has so scrupulously adhered to conciseness, as to have rendered the argument and the style, in places, rather difficult probably to persons not accustomed to study. He trusts, however, that all that is necessary for the comprehension of his subject, is to read it *from beginning to end* with attention, with the references to the Bible most particularly, and with as much repetition as may be requisite to carrying its substance in the memory during the perusal. It is presumed that no

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one will judge of the force of the argument on a partial view of its nature, nor venture to put forth any attempt at reply which does not fully disprove, by discussing all the main parts of the controversy, the point intended to be established: *that the reasons for British subjects uniting with the Church of England, are infinitely stronger than those for separation from it.*

The eighth chapter ends with the demonstration of Episcopacy and Prelacy as divine appointments for the most essential purposes. The ninth chapter contains the objections of dissenters to the Church as an establishment; to the Prayer-book, &c. &c. with appropriate answers. The tenth contains the conclusion of the whole argument, as it affects Nonconformists. An Appendix to the volume is intended to exhibit the relations of the government of the country to members of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and to those of opposing societies.

The Author has to regret a considerable number of typographical errors, for the greater part of which he is himself accountable, and feels that the chief excuses which he can offer,—his distance from the press, and the hurry of a single revision,—are but an inadequate apology.

| <i>Page,</i> | <i>line,</i> | <i>Error.</i> | <i>Correction.</i> |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 66 | 23, | insert only before | not. |
| 90 | last line, | Sect. XI. | Sect. II. |
| 119 | 23 | polity | policy. |
| 129 | 32 | recal | recall. |
| 132 | 5 | these | there. |
| 133 | 12 | contexts | contents. |
| 160 | 2 | subsequently | subsequent. |
| 177 | 7 | seources | sources. |
| 187 | 1 | ministers | ministering. |



INTRODUCTION.

THE exposition of Scripture here presented to the public, is intended to display to Churchmen, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Independents peculiarly so called, Methodists, the Society of Friends, Unitarians, and other communities, the true character, in its great outlines, of religious society. A minute examination of any of the doctrines peculiarly held by any sect as conducive to salvation, has been altogether omitted. Allusion only is made to any peculiarities of what is intended for saving doctrine. It cannot be questioned, that an exposure of such of the ascertained doctrines of any of the above sects as are in contradiction to truth, together with the refutation of the arguments of practical and historical infidelity, in addition to the subjoined discourse, would show much more fully the evils of departure from the divine law of church-membership, and supply new motives for its rigorous observance. I beg to submit to those who have leisure and

talents for such works, whether a manual on each of the controversies of the church, on points of doctrine, with several of the forementioned dissentients from her Creed, and with the members of the Church of Rome, is not a desideratum in Theological literature.

It appears very possible to determine the questions in volumes of a moderate compass, which would not make larger demands on the attention of ordinary readers than they might conveniently satisfy. These controversies, like several others, lie so dispersed through many separate authors, that it cannot be expected they should be known by the mass of the religious community, nor, if commonly read, would the generality of readers be able, probably, to balance the opposing arguments, and form legitimate conclusions. So much has been written on all sides, that little can be required but arrangement and condensation.

This is with me no hastily conceived suggestion. Having for several years observed, with the most poignant regret, the numerous and increasing dissensions of the people of this country on religious matters;—being fully persuaded that much of the difficulties and discontents of the times arises from the differences connected with that subject, which, of all in the world, is the one, when really understood, most assuasive of all envious and hostile feeling; and that genuine Christianity is to a most alarming extent

lost in that division of the house against itself, which threatens, unless timely checked by Divine Providence, well nigh to extinguish the pure light of evangelical truth in the land ;—knowing too that the contentions among the professors of religion take their origin from the abuse of private judgment on the one hand; and of church authority on the other; and being deeply sensible that much which is advanced against the church of this realm by the most able and successful advocates of nonconformity, and doubtless regarded by them as unanswerable truth, is either downright falsehood or absolute irrationality; and that multitudes in the middle and lowest ranks of life more particularly, of moderate or not any education, are seduced and imposed upon by the specious arguments of these leading authorities;—I have long desired that some of the members of that church would step forth with so complete and convincing a refutation of the distinguishing tenets of *every* class of separatists from the Establishment, as should leave our opponents no escape from its force; but, by acknowledging their errors, throwing themselves into the arms of the church, which is willing to receive them, and thus cooperating to exhibit to the world below, and what is of far sublimer consideration, to the world above, a kingdom not only united by the acts of legislation, but by the bonds of christian fellowship.

Though many excellent works have been published,

yet it has never been my fortune to meet with one that realized my conceptions of comprehensiveness of argument and simplicity of design; and being of opinion that the time is arrived when every effort ought to be made in support of truth without delay, and only lamenting that a treatise of a more voluminous nature has not already been edited by other and abler hands, I have thought it my duty, under my present convictions, to execute at least *a small portion of the task* with such ability as my circumstances permit.

The objections of even Protestant separatists are notoriously of such a multifarious character as appears to defy that classification which may give to each its proper weight and position in the general argument. They are a chaotic mass, into which I have despaired of infusing the lucidity of order and the exactness of proportion. I have however adopted a plan, I hope, of sufficient perspicuity. It may be necessary only to observe, in order to its comprehension, that after certain preliminaries, I commence with the exposure of those arguments for immediate inspiration, which are most captivating to the unlearned, and spread even in other classes their pernicious influence; that I afterwards address myself to those writers who claim no mode of spiritual illumination superior to that by which we hope we are ourselves guided; and that I bring all my own arguments to bear on this one point—separation—a unity of purpose, the want of which in other

productions has in my opinion mainly contributed to perpetuate that confusion and obscurity in which the subject appears to be involved in the mind of nonconformity, and to which it owes so much of its lamentable prevalence. It is hoped that the system of independency is demonstrated to be utterly unfounded in truth.

I am not blind to the imperfections of the Church to which I belong, nor averse to her improvement. I venture to believe that I do not differ from a vast majority of her truest sons, in my opinion that her creeds and forms and discipline may, with somewhat of plausibility, appear to some minds too open to parliamentary influence. Neither do I shrink from the confession that her Prayer-book is not a work of absolute perfection. I am not unconscious of dissension among her ministers—nor am I insensible of evil in her discipline. I believe that alterations might be effected in various departments of the church—not merely some to accommodate scrupulous consciences, but others to advance the cause of truth; and I frankly avow my wish that such reforms were attempted. I think christian kindness and prudence prompt the accommodation, that improvements should be made in whatever is improveable; that the compilers of our Prayer-book themselves admitted and acted upon the principle, and that the rulers of our Establishment are fully competent to the execution of the task. But in the absence, and

with only the prospect of these corrections, I am ready to maintain that conformity is the duty of every subject of the crown.

I have heard much of high ground. I trust that it is God's ground; and high as that may be, I hope the ministers of the church will never be so treacherous to the cause of the Gospel and the souls of men, as to yield one inch of that sacred eminence to the clamorous ignorance and licentious passions of the times. I have drawn copiously and impartially from the writings of the most esteemed nonconformists professing Protestantism, and if I have subverted their sophistry, our point in dispute with them is established. The separatist has long used his liberty to bring false and railing accusation against the church, and to treat her ministers with much cruelty and injustice:—all we ask is liberty for truth, both in its promulgation and reception.

And I cannot commit this little work to publication, without requesting my christian readers to offer continually to Almighty God, in the name of his Son, their most fervent petitions, that it may be instrumental to the propagation of his holy will, and to the extension of his kingdom.

WHISSONSETT,
February, 1836.

THE REFUTATION
OF
NONCONFORMITY,
&c.

CHAPTER I.

SCRIPTURE THE ONLY RULE.

PROTESTANT separatists from the Church of England constantly assert that the Scripture is their sole authority. None can admire this profession more than the true churchman, as he places his own adherence to the establishment on the same ground. One of their most enlightened and standard writers has declared,—"The dissenters appeal to every candid and impartial inquirer who will attend to the subject, whether their dissent from the Church of England is not founded on the most weighty and cogent reasons. They have only one principle on which they rest their cause,—that the Scriptures are a perfect rule of faith and manners." (Towgood, p. xxxv. xxxvi. Harlow edition, 1809.) Another author, inferior to

few or none of them in learning and talent, has confidently affirmed, that the distinctions of the Independents "are the results of a simple submission and a close adherence to the *sole authority* of our Lord Jesus Christ, declared in the Scriptures of the New Testament." (Pye Smith's Letter to Lee, p. 14, 2nd edition, 1835.) And a third, of very high consideration amongst them, has laid down as one of the first principles of Nonconformity, "the all-sufficiency and exclusive authority of the Scriptures as a rule of faith and practice." (J. A. James, "Dissent and the Church of England," p. 10, 3rd edition, 1831.) It is the profession of all those dissenters who are believers in their divine origin, and it is never questioned by the charitable censor of their conduct, that multitudes of them are sincere in making it. The object of this work is to demonstrate that they, notwithstanding, act in opposition to Scripture, by that very separation from the establishment which they maintain it sanctions, and to call upon them, in consistency with their profession, to unite with its ministry and members.

But though it is morally certain that there ought to be no separation from the church, it is not intended to deny to men the liberty of hearing any other person than the ministers of the church expound the Scriptures, whom they deem better instructed in divine knowledge than themselves, provided these labours of the laity, whether public or private, do not interfere with the services of the church ministry. It is every man's right and duty to endeavour, as much as in him lies, to enlighten his less informed neighbours under certain restrictions.

Those restrictions principally are, that he does not break the unity of the church; that he and his hearers belong to the episcopal body as a matter of prior obligation—with that worship and with that communicate; and that they hold their separate assemblies only in subordination to the ordained teachers. It is in conjunction with this liberty that I would be understood to maintain the indispensable connexion with the church; and it is only when combined with ecclesiastical union, and the acknowledgment of the superior claims of an episcopal ministry, that the license of lay preaching can be supposed allowable.

It appears, I think, from Scripture that such liberty as we have just stated is allowed. It may be doubted whether it would be used to any great extent, were the claims of the church ministers duly admitted by the people; but connected with their services, it would probably be productive of more good than evil, as whatever false views of Scripture might be advanced by the ignorant, the consultation of a learned ministry would have, at least, a tendency to correct.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE CONCURRENT TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE, OF REASON, AND OF THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS.

It may probably be with perfect truth affirmed of the Bible, independently of the prophetic portion of its contents, that it is by far the most difficult of all intelligible books to understand. Those who are acquainted with biblical criticism can, I conceive, very readily admit the justice of the remark. Disputed however it is by many, who would gladly justify their own exaltation into the chair of instruction without episcopal license. It is even asserted, that the passage in Isaiah xxxv. 8, is a proof of the facility of interpreting the New Testament: "And an highway shall be there—and it shall be called the way of holiness; the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." Whereas it is certain, as may be seen by a reference to the place and its context, the Scripture is not mentioned, nor, except in a very remote degree, alluded to, and much less its private interpretation by individuals; the words signifying in effect, that God would be with the true disciples and followers of Christ, and that his reli-

gion, if duly explained by the ministry of the word, requires not great talents for its comprehension, but may be practised by men of very common capacities. It is urged again, that the people are directed to examine the word of God, (John v. 39,) and are commended for making that examination, (Acts xvii. 10, 11); and argued, that it is unlikely that that book should be difficult to which they are referred. It is, doubtless, highly desirable that every man should read the Scriptures. It would be a means of reviving much of that divine knowledge which he had previously acquired, and would thus be a source to him of great comfort and edification. It would also be some security against false or careless instruction on the part of his ministers; and it might be, in many instances, a mode of attaining fresh accessions of information, new impressions, and new convictions, of a sound nature: but the command of the Saviour, and the commendation of the sacred historian, allude rather to the investigation of the doctrines of the ministry, than to the formation of others unassisted by ministerial instruction. It may be very easy for the Jews to have searched the Old Testament, for the purpose of ascertaining whether the doctrines are to be found in it which a teacher may have affirmed to be a particular portion of its contents; but not for the Christian to interpret the New Testament, in these days, without human assistance. And there is nothing in Scripture or experience to make us think the contrary. The composition of the christian Scriptures is of a nature peculiarly difficult of interpretation. Not only the circumstances under which they were written are remote and not easily discoverable;

the manners and customs of the persons immediately concerned, peculiar and obsolete ; and the style of writing, in several respects, singularly idiomatic ;—but the facts that these Scriptures were not addressed directly to ourselves, but to others, and at a great distance of time ; that in many places they indirectly teach the great truths of religion, by being written in immediate allusion to certain circumstances of different and ancient people, and leaving us to gather doctrines from incidental notices ; and that they, in various parts, touch on the same topics in diverse manners, so that much collation is necessary ; being in all these respects much unlike a work of human genius, where the author aims at perspicuity, and intends to deliver his ideas so that it is scarcely possible for his meaning to be mistaken ;—these facts, among others, render the New Testament extremely liable to misconception. St. Peter also informs us, that in the Epistles of St. Paul are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable, wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction. But there is one circumstance—the many and wide disagreements between the opinions of sects and individuals who peruse the Scripture for instruction—which may alone evince no slight degree of difficulty attending its interpretation. Numbers of persons read the Scriptures with a desire of arriving at the truth, and approach the volume with prayer for divine illumination ; and yet of that multitude, how many view in very different lights the selfsame passages, and draw extremely dissimilar and even opposite conclusions from the entire revelation. Now if the Bible were

easily understood, these dissensions would not arise amongst men who study the sacred lessons with like teachableness and devotion. If a written document were simple and unequivocal in its subject and composition, it would; in all probability, be understood nearly, if not precisely, in the same manner by almost any number of readers, who, with moderate talents, inquired into its signification; and the general result of private researches into God's word, by men of good understanding and pious sentiments, can be accounted for only by its frequently apparent ambiguity.

The difficulty of discovering in many matters of common concern the sense of Scripture, as well as the vast importance of a due perception of its truths, render it very desirable to use every means in our power of ascertaining its purport with all practicable precision. It is foreign to my immediate design, to make any allusion to the critical examination of its text. My object is now rather to direct attention to certain methods of verifying the results of that criticism, and to affix on them that value to which they are justly entitled.

An anxious inquirer into truth, after examining the opinions of commentators on any controverted point of Scripture, and forming the best judgment in his power by the consideration of their arguments and of any additional ones of his own, is naturally desirous of receiving, if possible, some corroborations of the accuracy of his decision, derived, in some measure at least, from independent sources. Two such extrinsic means immediately present themselves—his natural reason, and the writings of the apostolic

fathers; and they stand preeminently above all other auxiliaries that can be imagined. But such has been the abuse of reason, that its legitimate office must be guarded by some kind of definition.

In calling reason to aid our inquiries after truth, it is not insinuated, that by our rational powers we could have wrought out for ourselves any of those sublime and mysterious revelations of Scripture; neither is it intended that we can thoroughly comprehend, or could it be expected, as reasonable beings, thoroughly to comprehend every portion of a volume which has the Almighty for its author, and in many places for its subject. It is signified, principally, that our reason may be exercised in judging of the excellence of those doctrines or dispensations of God revealed in his holy word, which are not superior to our comprehension.

This is one use of reason, to which it is applied by dissenters as well as by churchmen. It is not uncommon for any alleged truth of Scripture to be defended or disputed, as being reasonable or unreasonable. But something more is required, principally, in support of this application of the rational faculty, than the general concurrence of mankind, particularly by those who make the Scriptures their only oracle. It is possible it might, without any but human authority, be only a lamentable instance of the pride of human intellect. The practice however rests on infinitely higher grounds. In several instances in Scripture, God has explicitly referred his dealings with men to the arbitration of their reasonable judgment. He has authorised us to employ reason as an independent test of the wisdom and

goodness of such of his dispensations as are level to our capacities. The inspired warrants of this exercise of the faculty are extremely perspicuous. They need only be read with common attention and reflection in order to be perceived. They are so simple, that I shall content myself with merely referring the reader to the Bible for some of the most remarkable examples, though they are at the same time so beautiful and instructive illustrations of our argument, that it is with reluctance I refrain from expounding their signification. The reader then is requested, carefully and intelligently to peruse the following texts:—Ezek. xviii. 25, 29:—Matt. vi. 39; vii. 11; Luke v. 31; xiii. 15, 16; Rom. v. 10; viii. 82. I think it is impossible to read these passages, with even prejudices hostile to the reception of the opinion, without perceiving that the Holy Spirit has addressed our reason as a separate and distinct arbiter of the righteousness of such of the dealings of God with mankind as He has enabled us to comprehend. We have seen then, I trust, the legitimacy of the use of reason under this limitation. With respect to the second auxiliary which we have specified, the writings of the apostolic fathers, their utility towards a right understanding of Scripture is equally unquestionable. But it may be necessary, to making our argument intelligible to the general reader, to enter into some particulars.

Among the eminent Christians who lived in the first centuries after the establishment of Christianity in the world, many were the authors of works, some of which have been transmitted to our times. These distinguished writers are called the Fathers of the

Church. They are, speaking generally, excellent evidences of facts. Even the later of them may perhaps be implicitly relied on, as to the existence of any particular contemporary ecclesiastical practice which they record. But it is always open to discussion in *their* case, whether the practice is not an innovation, or a departure from the customs of the church at its first institution. They are also not always regarded as the best expounders of Scripture. Some however of these ancient dignitaries were contemporary with the Apostles. There are books extant which claim to be the works, either original or translated, of five writers of their age, the claims of most of which are generally undisputed; and they are the works of men who were acquaintances and friends, pupils and converts, of one or other of the Apostles. Now it is evident, that the works of men thus happily distinguished both by the age in which they lived, and the opportunities of intercourse which they enjoyed with the inspired men, are not liable to the same objections as later writers, either as to the soundness of their doctrines, or their testimony to apostolic customs. Whatever ordinances or practices they relate as existing in their time, cannot be imagined innovations on the original system; and whatever interpretation they give of Scripture, must be entitled to at least a very respectful consideration. In reflecting on the human liability to err in the interpretation of the Scriptures, and on the greater facility of understanding a well-written production of mere human genius, we should naturally be sensible of what advantage it would have been to have enjoyed, like the first Christians, the oral instruction of

the Apostles, or of one of those persons who were united with them in habits of intimacy. This advantage, however, it is not for us to possess. But there is another which approaches it in value, and the next most desirable assistance that can be conceived would be the plain and intelligible writings of uninspired men who received immediate apostolic instruction. We are instinctively, as it were, impressed with an idea of the essential service which the writings of such persons might render to our inquiries after scriptural truth. Now this is exactly the kind of assistance which the writings of at least three reputed authors in the apostolic age afford.

Reason, then, and the writings of the apostolic fathers, appear to be eminently useful in our investigation of divine truth. Nor is it possible to conceive any other extrinsic means of interpreting Scripture at all comparable in authority to these. Independently of the means of internal criticism of Scripture, among which I include the ordinary assistance of the Spirit, there are no imaginable aids to its right interpretation but the light of nature and human testimony. And of all those men who have borne evidence to the truth of Scripture, to its signification, or to the customs and intentions of the most enlightened followers of our Lord, who would, without the greatest caution, presume to set his own opinions in opposition to the genuine productions of a friend and a disciple of an apostle? So fully do dissenters appear to recognize the force of these arguments, that one of their "standard" writers, in attempting to prove "that every lay Christian has a right to choose his own pastor," appeals to no authority but reason, Scripture,

and the undoubted practice of the primitive church, except that by which he is equally unsupported—the general acknowledgment of all the learned of our own communion. (Towgood, p. 87.)

Let us imagine then, that the sense of Scripture has been investigated by a diligent and careful examination of its contents, and ascertained, as it is thought, with exactness; the inquirer is at liberty to consult reason upon the matter under consideration, if it be one where reason is at all competent to decide, and also the apostolic fathers, for any evidence which they may supply. And these are the consequences to be deduced from applying to their authority:—First, with regard to reason: as God has referred his intelligible dealings with mankind to our reason and judgment for approbation, if it is argued by any disputant, that God has ordained any particular system according to his interpretation of Scripture, and if our reason teaches us that it is contrary to itself that such should be the divine intention; then its seeming unreasonable is a strong ground for believing that such disputant has erred in his view of Scripture on that particular subject; or if the position for which he contends is opposed to the opinions and assertions of all or any of the apostolic fathers, a more or less violent discredit is cast on its correctness. And if both reason and the apostolic fathers appear to agree in condemning the conclusion attempted to be drawn from Scripture, they are sufficient proof of its fallacy, should there be any probable mode of understanding Scripture on the point in question, which is not opposed by these separate criterions. And, on the contrary, if a wise

and careful examination of Scripture leads to any conclusion which is supported by both the auxiliaries to scriptural interpretation which we have named, then the concurrence of all these three authorities is a combination of evidence which rises almost as high as evidence can possibly go, and is irresistible.

This last inference is that on which we shall ground the principal arguments of the following discussion.

CHAPTER III.

OF CHRISTIAN UNITY.

It is our design in this chapter to inquire into the duty of Christians being united in the knowledge of the truth, or in the right understanding of the word of God, as a guide to immortality—in charity or love, and in society—and to ascertain the degree of importance to be attached to its observance. We will take these subjects separately in the order that has been stated.

I. No fact can be more indisputable among professing Christians, than that one of the chief objects of every believer in revelation is to attain a correct knowledge of its doctrinal truths; that though the understanding of the word of God is not of itself sufficient to ensure a man's salvation, yet that it is impossible to render due obedience to the Scripture without a due knowledge of its contents; that the more erroneous our views of the divine word, the more imperfect must be our conformity to its dictates; and that it is necessary to acquire a right apprehension of its saving doctrines, before we can perform as we ought our duties to Him who revealed them; and that it is therefore a duty, inasmuch as obedience is a duty.

These are positions for which it can hardly be requisite to adduce proofs before a professor of Christianity. Not only is the word of God evidently designed to be rightly understood, but it is the universal desire of all sincere believers in Scripture, at least to attain to a just perception of it in all its necessary doctrines. It is equally undeniable, that whatever it is in the word of God which is to be received by men as necessary for their salvation, or as conducive and useful towards it, there cannot possibly be more than one mode of understanding it aright. The word of God, in its separate texts, in its individual subjects, in the scope and design of its parts, and in its general purport, can have, respectively, but one genuine signification. Truth, considered as the word of God, intended for the salvation of men, must be one in the gross and in detail. It is perfectly impossible that there should be two ways of understanding it, in either respect, both disagreeing and inconsistent, and yet both right. The slightest contradictions among interpreters are proofs of error. It may be considered as an established and irrefragable axiom, that the word of God cannot in the least contradict itself. There being then but one true interpretation of that divine will which we have to obey, it is our duty to learn that particular signification.

And the word of God itself strongly evidences the same fact, and enforces the same obligation. In a variety of texts the "truth" evidently indicates the doctrines of Christ which are to be believed and obeyed for salvation, and at the same time their singleness. Truth in that sense is spoken of as if it

were a definite and individual object, and the highest spiritual benefits to men are ascribed to its operations. In one place it is written, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." (John xvii. 17, 19.) In another: "God will render to every man according to his deeds; unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish." (Rom. ii. 6, 8, 9.) In a third: "If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." (Heb. x. 26.) Several other quotations might be adduced to the same effect. In a few passages, indeed, the signification of the word is more definitely expressed, and the truth as it is in Jesus is described as an emanation from the third person in the Godhead, to which, in its revealed form, the same divine Being conducts the faithful and wise inquirer. The fruit of the Spirit is represented in all goodness and righteousness and truth; and that they should be guided into all truth by the Holy Ghost, was a promise of Christ to his Apostles.

It is not, however, always in the texts which literally refer to the truth, under that appellation, that its unity and the importance of its reception in all its purity are implied or expressed with the greatest plainness. Nor can the assertions of the unity of the faith (Eph. iv. 5, 13.) be regarded as most declaratory of the duty of attaining it. The strongest evidences of both the unity in question, and the contingent duty, are contained in certain proofs of God's providential care and design, that the truth should be

communicated to mankind with as little admixture as possible of error. These proofs are given in the declarations of the inspired writers, with reference both to their own ministerial labours and to those of preachers of inferior authority. The Apostles have in several instances borne written testimony to the fidelity and exactness with which they delivered the oracles of God. They affirm that they knew the truth and proclaimed it; that they preached, warning every man in all wisdom, and that their preaching was not with enticing words, and that they handled not the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commended themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. (2 Cor. iv. 2.) They were directed by that power which gave them utterance, to command their disciples to "stand fast in one Spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." (Phil. i. 27.) They were inspired to instruct mankind that Christ "gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, &c.; but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up unto him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." (Eph. iv. 11—15.) But nothing evinces more satisfactorily the duty of adhering closely to a standard of truth, than the admo-

nitions addressed in Scripture to less gifted teachers; particularly the directions given to Timothy and Titus. By referring to 1 Tim. i. 3; iv. 16; 2 Tim. i. 13; ii. 15; iv. 3: Tit. i. 9, and ii. 1, 7, 8, it will be seen that the Scripture directs these two illustrious ministers, in a great variety of expressions, to watch against error in others; to be cautious of admitting into the ministry those who were not qualified to preach the truth, and to be careful in maintaining that correctness of doctrine which is agreeable to the word of God, and such as no gainsayer could refute. They, one or both, were to charge some that they taught no other doctrine—to take heed to themselves and to the doctrine, to hold fast the form of sound words which they had heard—to study to show themselves approved unto God, workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth: they were warned that the time would come when men would not be able to bear sound doctrine, but would turn away their ears from the truth—that a pastor was to hold fast the faithful word as he had been taught, that he might be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers, and to speak those things which become sound doctrine; in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned.

These texts abundantly prove the duty of knowing the will of God truly, and of its being taught by ministers with accuracy: and so far are dissenters from the Church of England from disallowing the justice of these observations, that they assign to the propagation of truth a place among the highest rank of duties, and constitute it, if not the very chief,

a principal qualification of a minister of Christ. One of them writes—"But some will say, why disturb the harmony that now subsists between churchmen and dissenters? To this I reply, that the authority of truth is paramount and supreme; that the most kind and friendly office we can perform to any of our neighbours is to place before their eyes the truth of Christ, because, as the late venerable Thomas Scott used to say, 'truth is the only seed from which real holiness or happiness can grow; that the nearer we approach to truth, the nearer we approach to each other, and the sweeter our union will be.'" (Palmer's Protest. Diss. Catechism, by Newman.) But Mr. Josiah Conder, in his celebrated work on Protestant Nonconformity, has exalted the truth so highly as to make the knowledge of it almost, or quite, of itself a commission, a warranty, to preach. In attestation of which sentiment, I need refer the reader only to his sections (book ii. ch. 2) on the apostolic commission, and the source of ministerial authority; wherein are several *dicta* like the following: "The ministerial office consists in preaching the gospel, and if the gospel is faithfully and intelligently promulgated, the office is fulfilled. The building up of the body of Christ by the accession of these living stones, the evangelizing of all nations by the foolishness of preaching, is the work of the ministry—it is the same in every age." (§ 7.) "Every faithful preacher of the gospel, in fulfilling the will of Christ, claims to be invested with a necessary ministerial authority, an authority simply resulting from the message which he promulgates, and the command which he fulfils. We maintain that the authority

vested in the preacher of the gospel is derived immediately from the message which he publishes under the warrant of Christ; that the credentials of this authority are to be sought for in the correspondence of his ministerial labours to the dictates of inspired truth. Truth, by whomsoever it is promulgated, cannot but profess the same intrinsic authority." (§ 8.)

These last passages are from the pen of the Hooker of Nonconformists; a man whose work the eminent Mr. James of Birmingham, in his "Dissent and the Church of England," thus eulogizes: "I also strongly and above all recommend the cool, the philosophical, the scriptural, the masterly work of Conder on Nonconformity."

Nothing then can be much more secure from dispute than the importance of the truth being both preached by the minister, and learnt by the people. It is specially provided for by the word of God; is admitted as the great object of preaching by the dissenter; and is the doctrine of reason. The result of reasoning on the subject has indeed been understated. Reason teaches, that to learn the truth with exactness is one of the very highest of all duties. It is most unquestionably the consummation of duty to perform the will of God perfectly. Perfect obedience is proposed several times in Scripture as the aim of christian endeavour. But we cannot possibly obey God to perfection without a perfect knowledge of his will. Therefore we are under the same obligation to learn that will perfectly as to perform it perfectly; and to perform it without imperfection, is, however difficult and however unnecessary for salvation, at least a duty solemnly enjoined on the disciple of Jesus.

II. We are next to investigate the duty of professing Christians being united in a spirit of love. And on this point Scripture is so express that it needs no argument. It is only necessary to show that it is made a duty of the very first importance.

It is very much this kindly consent and agreement which the Apostle particularly enjoins, when he commands and exhorts the Corinthians to speak all the same thing, "that there be no divisions among them, but that they be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (1 Cor. i. 10.) He urged this unity upon them because, he says, it had been declared to him that there were contentions among them, which contentions he calls in another place, envying, strife, and divisions. It is this concord and communion which he partly intends when he entreats them "to be perfect, to be of one mind, and to live in peace." (2 Cor. xiii. 11.) But it is not only on the Corinthians that it is inculcated: it is the common doctrine to the churches. St. Paul, in writing to the Philippians, (ii. 1, 2,) says: "If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels of mercies, fulfil ye my joy that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." Then again we read in the book of the Acts, (iv. 32,) of the multitudes of them that believed, "being of one heart and of one soul." It is besides a commandment of St. Peter to his disciples, "to be all of one mind, having compassion one of another, and to love as brethren." (1 Pet. iii. 8.) A similar lesson was received by the Ephesians: "I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

endeavouring to keep 'the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.' (Eph. iv. 1, 3.)

But this virtue is enforced upon us in Scripture under the name of charity. Charity, in the language of Scripture, it need not perhaps be observed, does not bear the exclusive sense of alms-giving which is frequently assigned to it in common discourse; it is rather the spirit of love towards our fellow-creatures, with all its active fruits—a catholic affection which extends to the whole human family, but when restricted to the narrow household of faith, subsisting in its purest and sublimest essence and character. St. Paul has well guarded even the English reader against mistaking its signification. Charity, says he, suffereth long and is kind, bears evil treatment with patience, and is kind even to the injurious. Charity envieth not, charity vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own interest only, but also that of others; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil of men without just occasion; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; concealeth all which is bad of others that it can consistently with its duty—believeth all the good of them that is credible; hopeth all things for the best concerning them, if there is room for hope; and endureth all injuries of which private and public benefit does not imperiously demand the repression. These are works of charity alone towards each other, either as men or as Christians. They whose disposition is to perform the acts of charity or love, are possessed with a charitable spirit. Those who are disposed to evil, in judgment or in action, are strangers to its divine influence. And to charity we

are exhorted, in Scripture, in a tone the most solemn and imperative. "Put on," writes St. Paul to the Colossians, "as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another : and above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." In a long catalogue of christian virtues, which St. Peter commands the Christian to acquire, he crowns the whole with brotherly kindness and charity. The same Apostle echoes the very sentiment of St. Paul just cited : "Above all these things have fervent charity among yourselves." Our blessed Saviour has taught us, that on the love of God, and the love of our neighbour, hang all the law and the prophets. And in unison with that declaration, St. Paul has pronounced, that love is the fulfilling of the law. These injunctions and doctrines from the word of God are amply sufficient to establish the duty of such love, and, I will add, its necessity. Shall God command Christians, in such expressions, universally to experience this affection, and shall we feel ourselves at liberty to disobey? But Scripture does not leave us to make this matter of inference. If this spirit of love breathes not in us, we are deceiving ourselves, and are not Christians at all. So essential an ingredient is it in true Christianity, that it is indispensable to its existence. Can any words be much stronger to this effect, than those of our Saviour, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another : " or those of St. John, "Let us love one another : for every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not,

knoweth not God, for God is love. If God so loved us, (as to send his Son to be a propitiation for our sins,) we ought also to love one another. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. Whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."

The necessity of mutual love among Christians can scarcely be expressed in stronger terms. If any words can increase our obligation to acquire and cultivate so heavenly a temper, it is the sentence of St. Paul. He instructs us, that if we have not the spirit of charity, and its moral creations, that we are void of true religion; that it matters not what is the fulness of our faith, or the profundity of our knowledge,—that we may even perform miracles, or utter prophecies, but if we are not animated by this divine principle, we are as nothing, or worse than nothing in the eye of heaven. "Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." (1 Cor. xiii.)

It is vain to attempt within narrow limits to describe that love which must necessarily subsist between true disciples and followers of Christ, as children of the same Father by nature and by grace; partakers of the same redemption, and heirs of the

same promises. It is superfluous to prove that it is a fellowship of the most affectionate feeling, and that such a communion, arising from obedience to the truth as it is in Jesus, must be unity, and unity in its completion.

III. Now it remains to be observed, that however little it may be comprehended by Christians in general, the Scriptures certainly contemplate a union of true believers in society. Evidences of this fact are contained in several passages of Scripture, which mention the unity in express terms. (Rom. xii. 5: 1 Cor. xii. 13: Eph. iv. 4: Col. iii. 15.) Christians are included, according to these authorities, in one body. The doctrine is very instructively implied in Phil. i. 27. But other texts are more explicit, in either enlarging on the idea of unity, or arguing on its assumption. Of the former kind are the following, taken from 1 Cor. xii. 12, 27: Eph. iv. 16. It will be immediately perceived, that in these places Christians, as members of a church, are compared to the limbs as members of a body. "As the body is one," says St. Paul to the Corinthians, "and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles; for the body is not one member, but many; and ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." In his Epistle to the Ephesians, after specifying the uses of the ministry, and its subserviency to the growth of christian unity; "From Christ," he adds, "the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effec-

tual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." The same unity is very spiritually inculcated under an allusion to the bread partaken of at the Lord's supper. "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? for we, being many, are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Cor. x. 17.) This communion is indeed an emblem of unity in both society and love.

A farther proof of the same unity is deducible from the practice of excommunication. Supposing, what is generally admitted, that the primitive churches had apostolic authority for excluding its reprobate members from the ceremonies of worship and communion, by way of punishment, it immediately follows, as a necessary consequence, that there could exist no separate society of Christians in which those men could be received, according to the divine intention, and enjoy the privileges of the christian church. For if it were so, the apostolic authority for the church to punish by excommunication were nugatory. The simple fact of punishing a man, by inspired mandate, with excommunication, implies that there was no separate institution where he could be admitted in the character of a christian worshipper. The church, in short, was one society.

The revelation of the divine displeasure against divisions among Christians, is a branch of the same argument. It is hardly possible to name a single error which is more strongly reprobated in the word of God, than separation into parties or sects. The principle of separation among Christians is far from

encouraged by that general ascension of Christ, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand." (Matt. xii. 25.) It was in consideration of the factious spirit and conduct of the Corinthians that St. Paul addresses to them this earnest exhortation: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. Every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided?" (1 Cor. i. 10, 12, 13.) On the same account he adds, (1 Cor. iii. 1, 3; 4,) that he "could not speak unto them as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, for ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? for while one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?" This is awful language. And besides these admonitions, the passage in Gal. v. 19—21, possesses this character in so high a degree, that it behoves all denominations of Christians to see well that they do not fall under its condemnation. Among the works of the flesh, of which it is written, "they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God," stands in our English translation "*seditions*;" in the place of this word "*seditions*" should be substituted "*divisions*," meaning divisions among Christians into parties. (See Note A.) Thus divisions of this nature are one species of those works of the flesh which

they who commit shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven.

Now I intend not in this stage of our inquiry to determine the locality of this one body. Without limiting it to any individual society, I shall offer a few arguments, by no means the strongest that could be adduced, but nevertheless such as I deem sufficient for the present, to prove that the unity contemplated is not confined to single congregations, but is designed to embrace the entire christian world. It is possible that some of the texts which we have quoted may in their primary signification respect an assembly of worshippers in one place of audience. I will even suppose, for the sake of argument, that, according to the opinion of the Congregationalists, there are but two meanings of the word *church* in Scripture—that it signifies either, an individual congregation, or believers in the aggregate dispersed throughout the universe. I will further suppose for a moment, on the same condition, that any one of the denominations of Christians is that which is most strictly scriptural in its form of ecclesiastical institution. The Independents will be forward to assert their own scripturality. The Baptists and Methodists and others will of course be equally disposed to claim the same honour for themselves. Whatever ought to be the constitution of the christian church, I will endeavour to make it appear that the unity in point of society should be universal.

This I think can be done very briefly. There is not an independent who will dispute that the Scriptures intend at least congregational unity; that all

individuals in a church considered as a congregation, are, if they are true Christians, members of Christ as well as members in particular of that one body; that they ought all, as servants of Christ, to partake of the same bread, observe the same christian worship, and be united as brethren in christian fellowship: they are all of them, in short, members of one society. It is needless in this place to attempt to describe more particularly the spiritual or scriptural connexion between them. We assume that there are social ties which bind them together, agreeable to the divine will; but we leave them undefined. We suppose them united according to Scripture, as far as Scripture has prescribed the mode of union. We impute to them the essential properties, whatever they may be, of corporate unity; and it is equally certain, that every true Christian living is regarded in Scripture as a member of Christ. Now then it appears to be an immediate and self-evident consequence from these premises, that every individual and true Christian whatever, has spiritually and virtually a right to be a member of that congregation. We know the physical impossibilities to all believers scattered throughout the world worshipping together. We are not speaking of its actual practicability for the world, but only of the abstract right. There ought not to be any spiritual impediment to community. The congregations of worshippers ought to be so united within themselves, that any follower of Christ might, as opportunity offered, or as circumstances required, see the way open in his conscience to their worship and communion; might join them as a member of their body because he

and they were all members of Christ, that there ought not to be any bar of human device and forgery to exclude such a person from participation of Christ. And as this is true of any individual Christian, it is a principle of intercommunity which extends itself through all the faithful of Christendom. All true members of Christ are members of one body. Every man amongst them is spiritually a member of every church. Thus all Christians on earth may and ought to be, as a body, united.

It may be further observed, that if it can be shown from Scripture, by any arguments independent of those which we have now advanced in favour of a catholic church, that the separate congregations of Christians were united under one government, which consequently produced social union, if, in fact, as far as Christianity had extended in the history of the canonical books, it appears that there was one spiritual incorporation of the believers, most probably for the sake of unity in truth and love, we shall then better see the reasons for the union of the church being so much insisted on in Scripture. It would be a necessary concomitant of the one truth and the one charitable spirit. The above induction, and the new proof from Scripture, will mutually confirm each other. We shall be the more certain, on discovering that the union of churches is a matter of Scripture history, that our reasoning is correct; and reasoning will serve to convince us that we do not misinterpret the language of inspiration. We shall, in short, perceive the combined evidence of Scripture and reason to the fact of ecclesiastical union, and Scripture, it will be seen in a subsequent

part of this volume, does supply us with separate proofs. We may here then assert the fact on the arguments just adduced, corroborated by its additional testimony.

We have now spoken of union in truth, in love, and in society. And to be united in these three respects must be the essence of christian unity on earth, and a foretaste of reunion in heaven. It is impossible to deny that the unity which we have considered in all its parts would be the perfection of christian churchship. Imagination delights in that beautiful picture of piety which would be presented by the world, were all men spiritually united in one church, hearing and following ministers of the same true doctrine, and eating the bread of life with one heart and one soul. Were indeed all men hearers of the truth and worshippers in one true church, the ministers would have only to edify the adult and to educate the young. Such a state of optimism could be conceived that ministers might be altogether dispensed with; and that every man should know the Lord from the least to the greatest. This would be a reign of Christ on earth. I here neither assert nor deny, that such a consummation is to be expected. In familiar language, there are many degrees of excellence. It would be a great improvement on the present state of the world, if all who professed Christianity were united in society, truth, and love, and were endeavouring to bring others to the same agreement. Certainly it is impossible for Christ's religion to be practised as it ought till such a change is produced. Nor is it for any one to say, if provision is made for

unity in the word of God, to what success rightly-directed endeavours might conduce. Most undoubtedly, the nearer we approach to either of the states of union, the nearer we approach to Christ; and the more remote that object, the farther we stray from him. And if it is, as it appears, the design of the Almighty that all men should be one in Christ, it is an end proposed to man which challenges emulation as the grandest achievement of his spiritual exertion.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE PRESENT STATE OF RELIGIOUS SEPARATION AMONGST PROTESTANTS IN ENGLAND.

It is scarcely possible to conceive a more melancholy contrast with the scriptural idea of unity portrayed in the last chapter, than the picture of dissent exhibited at the present time in this country; a composition disfigured not only by the variety of sects and diversity of doctrines, but by the dislike inseparable from conscientious disagreement, and, in too many instances, by the bitterness of zeal. To fill up the measure of our errors, even men of considerable learning and religious disposition appear to view the confusion with complacency, as if it were the work of the Deity. Complaints are common against the church; but seldom, if ever, are there any lamentations heard from those who are loudest in her condemnation over the numerous contrarieties of her opponents. An author whose opposition to the church is most violent, for a man of cultivated mind, would try her merits by comparing her with only one of the opponent sects, and so far he would be justifiable; but if his silence leaves it to be in-

ferred, that he can forget or excuse every other existing sect or heresy, he suffers himself to appear in a light which casts upon him no honourable reflection.

The existence of sects is notorious. It is a standing evidence of our religious divisions. The exact number is uncertain; but it may not be unnecessary to observe, for those whose observation has been local and reading confined, that twenty seems to be a moderate computation. The record of a dissenting historian of different denominations, exceeded that number prior to certain recent excrescences and subdivisions. And it must be particularly noticed, that not only professors of Christianity may be denominated violators of the unity signified; the free-thinker, the sceptic, the man who is indifferent to all religions, the deist, the theophilanthropist, the atheist, are all examples in kind. Let not this sentence be stigmatized as unjust, as the illiberal judgment of staunch episcopalianism. It is evident to intuition, that these distinctions could not exist were all men united in *any one* christian society established in the country. And with respect to the divisions among Christians, they are, in at least the most popular sects, so many instances of separate communion. The baptist owns no church-membership with the methodist; and neither of these unites in worship with the independent: baptist will even exclude baptist from the altar, on account of dissension. None of these religionists, as well as others, would communicate with members of the established church. The form of kneeling alone would, probably, present an insuperable obstacle to a performance of the ceremony. It may be retorted, that the churchman

would feel an equal or greater horror of approaching the altar of the sectarian. These are mentioned only as a few, out of many examples of dismemberment, where there ought to be only one incorporation. (See Note B.)

The difference of doctrine, our second topic, is not so clearly defined as the difference of sects. The sects mark out divisions of themselves. They do not always indicate a distinction of creeds. The ostensible cause of separation is sometimes a mere peculiarity in government and discipline; and where symbols of faith do not exist, as is frequently the case, there is much vagueness and variety under individual denominations. Of sects, however, whose leaders are men of some learning, the doctrines and practices have obtained a degree of fixation. Books are published which are to a certain extent standards of their peculiarities. The methodists, baptists, independents, quakers, swedenborgians, unitarians, deists, have all their literati. The works of Barclay and Gurney, Wesley and Whitefield, of Belsham and Priestley, Booth and Gale, and of a host of deistical writers, may all be consulted as authorities for the distinguishing tenets of their several fraternities; and in many points the dissensions even of the most enlightened run into great latitude. But as we descend lower in the scale of erudition, these distinctions widen. It is not uncommon for the most unlearned to affect to perform the functions of ministers of Christ. The ability to peruse the pages of the English Bible, stamps them at once with competent literary qualification. Preachers will even assume the office of teaching that Word which they

cannot read in their mother-tongue. The natural consequences of these liberties of prophesying is doctrine of an endless and incalculable diversity. In a great degree, unguided by any foreign or vernacular authority, every man follows that which appears right in his own eyes. It is thus that many of the nominal followers of Wesley, the Wardleys, and the Bournes, raise their hosts of adherents, and divide the dishonour of sectarianism with Southcote and Irving and the tongues. But those who imagine that the partitions into sects mark all the diversities of doctrine, would form a very inadequate conception of the errors of the times. There is scarcely a wider dissension between the most educated of two opposite professions, than often exists, as far as we can possibly judge, between the varieties of talents in the same society. Where men discharge the duties of the ministry with extremely little, or absolutely no human learning whatever, there is a failure of almost all security for the true interpretation of any one text of Scripture. Those who are acquainted with our rural districts, know how prevailing a custom it is for thousands to hear the most illiterate teachers with the profoundest reverence. Nothing is more easy than for the country pastor, if disengaged from the duties of his own ministry, to hear, in the open face of heaven, most erroneous constructions put on well ascertained passages of truth,—to see the people receiving very different ideas of God from those which He has revealed, and imbibing, in short, very deleterious nostrums for the pure waters of life. Judging from my own observation, the most fatal illusions appear to be extravagances concerning

predestination, indefectible grace, the divine decrees, faith without works, a false theory of conversion, and awful perversions of the doctrine of the influence of the Spirit.

It ought not to be omitted, that dissension exists among the clergy. Of this, more in the sequel.

We give but little space to divisions and dissensions, because they are too evident to be denied, and may be considered as facts long ago established. When we charge the sectarians with animosities, we approach ground that is more debateable. It has been often asserted, that no very kindly sympathy obtains between the rival sects: nor is it possible for the most cordial love to consist with disagreement. But it is not with their mutual aversions that I intend now to interfere; my contest lies with their hostility to the ministry and constitution of the church as by law established. And there is too much evidence on record of this most unchristian fact, that sectarians, in other religious objects extremely discordant, can at least unite in one common purpose of working its hurt, and even its destruction, by weapons of carnal warfare.

It is true that the disapprobation of the church is attempted, in numbers of its opponents, with many graces of humanity. No liberal or candid heart would think one moment of branding the genuine and enlightened Wesleyan with deeper aversion and deadlier intentions, than those which are essential to division and disagreement; and none, I believe, are more disposed to stand aloof from any unholy political alliance. The list of combatants appears to contain noble and generous names in other battalions of

the array. It is admitted likewise, that the polemical attacks on the institution are often made with a fair display of the elegance of composition. Where there are any pretensions to scholarship, the language of our assailants is generally free from gross vulgarity and brutal insolence. But this does not make the publications the less effectual with that class for whose instruction they are intended. They are couched, indeed, in the language most calculated to entice and persuade the more refined, and proceed from not a whit the weaker resolution to subvert, because the idea is generally clothed with decency. Hostility is not only the evident, but the avowed principle; and its object, that revolution, vaguely defined both in its measures and its consequences, which is denominated, separation of the church and state. This reverse is designed to be brought upon the members of the church, even upon the king himself; the great majority of the nobles and gentry of the land; upon the ministry of the establishment; and, though last not least, upon the poor and uneducated portion of the people, for whose benefit an endowed church is more particularly calculated, not by the force of argument, but the voice of power, against the better judgment of the intelligent, and through the instrumentality of men who have renounced the church services. The enlightened churchmen are not to enjoy the blessing of liberty in retaining their predilections, which, as they most firmly believe, are authorized by the revealed will of God, but must be compelled, if possible, by numbers to sacrifice their consciences: and by numbers of those identical persons who are most clamorous for

the right of private judgment, and are enjoying it almost, as it ought to be enjoyed, in perfect freedom. Thus are they nothing loth to exercise in, as I trust it will appear, an unrighteous cause, a semblance at least of that authority which our forefathers may have abused on the side of truth.

That this attack on the church party is generally conducted with apparent mildness by writers of education, is freely admitted. Their words are soft as butter, and smooth as oil. The tenor of their course is sometimes broken, displaying, however needlessly, that there is war in their hearts. (See note C.) And one considered respectable for erudition, dissuades from the dissolution of our connexion with the state, by no other means than a gentle conviction of its propriety on our minds from argument, only because measures of a less mild character would be of doubtful and dangerous application. He had not, alas! the virtue to avow, that they would be tyranny and oppression. It is the less surprising, that he can see no moral guilt in the atrocious decapitation of Charles. (See note D.)

When we retire from this class of disputants, we take our leave of almost all peace and moderation, even in appearance. There are writers, men unhappily of eminence, the tone of whose sentiments perfectly accords with intentions of hostility. Historical misrepresentations, partial statements and decisions, gross perversions of Scripture; scurrilous abuse in low vulgar language, political animosity, and natural injustice, are the striking characteristics of their publications. (See note E.) The poison of their conceptions circulates freely through the

country's veins. The rapidity of their sale shows how well these purveyors understand the appetite of the ignorant, and how successfully they can pander to its unsuspecting avidity. And were it necessary to adduce further evidence that the ministry of the church is regarded by dissenters with contemptuous and malignant passions, the spirit evoked by a champion of the establishment, in my own neighbourhood, immediately suggests itself. There is no reason for supposing it is not a fair sample of the literary portion of the dissenting public. Dissent and its sentiments must be supposed to be not very unequally diffused through the country, when every town, and almost every village, contains one or other of its institutions. On the occasion referred to, language such as would become the lips of insolent depravity and envious discontent, was produced in the publications of ministers to congregations.

And when these and such like sentiments are thus expressed in the deliberate writings of men of some education, what is there to excite our wonder, if, in the heat of debate, in the flow of oratory, the spirit of the educated should burst forth in much of its genuine severity? Various are the records of public intemperance of this nature. (See note F.) Nor can it reasonably be disputed, that these are not in perfect accordance with the cooler and more moderate manifestations of those who write. They are ebullitions to which the polemical writings of dissenters conduce on men of strong passions.

To complete this miserable detail, we have only to consider the consequences of these opinions in humbler stations. If such as have enjoyed the

advantages of a decent education, shall in their books and speeches vent much of the gall of bitterness, and proclaim their bondage to iniquity, what may we suppose will be the feelings and expressions of those who look to them for authority, and have not been nursed and educated in the lap of refinement? When it is known how the sentiments of the chiefs are propagated; when even thousands of handbills, to be purchased in small numbers for almost the lowest coin of the realm, assert that the bishops are impostors, the church an abomination, and tithes iniquity; when these and other such cheap publications are read with credulity through the land, can the eruptions of fury which come to our knowledge be supposed only occasional and rare? Can it with any plausibility be maintained, that the exclamations of one or two reported declaimers are only isolated facts? (See note G.) My own experience could furnish a tract of contradiction to such a supposition, in the relation of extremely wicked sentiments, which are the direct consequences of dissenting principles and doctrines on uneducated natures.

Another evidence of the animosity of dissent, is the necessity in which any of the more moderate and christianlike of its partisans finds himself of vindicating his mildness against the indignant censures of his confederates. (See note H.)

If all these evidences of an illiberal and uncharitable spirit among dissenters towards churchmen be considered, together with the proofs to which we have alluded of dissensions in doctrine, and divisions into sects, the disunion of protestant society in

England is almost as unchristian as it can possibly be, consistently with the existence of a political system.

But independency among professing Christians, in this country, has to be considered in other points of view. It may be examined in its internal relations, and as an element of the commonwealth.

It might be supposed, that the independent system is beautiful in its operation. But this is remote from the reality. One of its most eminent adherents has declared, that "the election of a minister always brings on a crisis in the history of the church." "No event that could happen can place the interests of the society in greater peril. The most disgusting exercise of the most disgusting tyranny takes place. The churches, victims to self-will, divisions producing incalculable mischief, the growth of religion destroyed, men can neither unite nor separate in peace." "In many of their societies," he says, "the pastor (so dependent for his bread on the people) has no official distinction or authority. He may flatter like a sycophant, beg like a servant, and woo like a lover: but he is not permitted to enjoin like a ruler. His opinion is received with no deference; his person is treated with no respect; and in the presence of some of his lay tyrants, he is only permitted to peep and mutter from the dust." "They send him anonymous and insulting letters; young, impertinent, and dictatorial persons wait upon him, and those who have nothing to recommend them but their impudence and offi-

ciousness, school him in an obsequatory strain. The congregation complain, sermons are very meagre or poor, and have a great sameness. They treat their minister as they would wild beasts, which are tamed into submission by hunger, and keep him humble by keeping him poor." These are a portion of the honest confessions of an independent. (See James's Christian Fellowship, or Church Member's Guide, pp. 60, &c., 249, &c.) "The sermons of some ministers," the same author himself acknowledges, "are poverty itself, a mere repetition of the same sentiments in the same words."

Other authorities of equal weight may be produced, in great abundance, to a similar effect: "The power of choosing a minister produces a feeling unfavourable to religious result, as it leads all, in some degree, to listen rather as *judges than disciples*. At certain periods this is essential, but in the minds of many, the feeling frequently continues; it is too congenial to the dominant propensity of human nature to be readily relinquished: hence often a variety of evils; hence the *rude remarks*, the *vulgar impertinence* of some, all ranks, and both sexes; hence the *general custom* of regarding *how* a thing is said, rather than the thing itself, though the most important perhaps within the compass of thought. With the consciousness of a minister as their servant *for Christ's sake*, many are disposed to think him such *for their own*, and to occasion disorder by unreasonable demands on his time, attention, and *docility*. The freedom from priestly domination, laid as the basis of the system, will excite at times such a feeling of independence, as will expand into something like

popular tyranny. Sensitive to encroachment, some will discover it where none was designed, and oppose themselves to the moral authority of virtue and wisdom; and others, or the same from the like principle, will seem to think it inconsistent with liberty to bow even to truth itself." (Binney's Life of Morell, p. 295, extracted from Brit. Mag. No. IV.) Again: "The supreme object of the ministry, in relation to the church, is to augment, in the character of its members, the glory that excelleth. But the tendency of many modern mistakes is to destroy the *very being and action* of the office altogether. In the same persons there is often to be found such a disastrous combination of absurdities as lead, in their legitimate operation, to the positive *silence* of an evangelical preacher. If you preach to saints, as you *ought* to preach; they are dissatisfied: if you preach to sinners, they are dissatisfied; angels do not require your instructions; and to preach to devils, if it were possible, would only excite still stronger animosity. So that as a benevolent intelligence, anxious to exert your faculties in promoting the knowledge and improvement of others, you are deprived by this sect of determined dissatisfactionists—the pest and scourge of many a church—of every sphere of active agency, and, in fact, virtually driven out of all the known worlds of the intelligent universe." (Ibid. p. 253.)

And no man who knows that the independent churches, as they are called, are voluntary associations, where each member has his vote, and where the majority rule in all church matters, can doubt the tendency of their system to produce all the division and the inefficiency which are observable in

their operations. For it is not only discord and animosity which are thus encouraged and brought into action; the liberty and the effect of evangelical preaching, on the showing of an eminent dissenter himself, are both destroyed. The power which is placed in the hands of the people by the constitution of independency, is evidently one which experience proves they are not qualified to exercise aright,—a power which they are not fit to be entrusted with in the existing state of popular ignorance, and the prevalence of natural passions. To show that the best informed dissenters are aware of this evil in their system, an acute and judicious writer in the *British Magazine*, No. IV., observes that the *Eclectic Review* admits, that the too frequent recurrence to the much misunderstood and much abused right of *suffrage* has a tendency to *turbulence*, whether in secular or in religious societies. (1831, p. 488.) The author of the remarks on the present state of the dissenting interests, &c., confesses that “the gains of independence is *hostile* to those connecting links which are *essential* to the preservation of order and good government.” (Ibid. p. 420.) The Rev. S. Morell writes thus: “Really during the time of my residence at ——— I saw and felt so much of the evils of a *vulgar democracy*, that it almost made me disaffected to the system. It is much easier to find fault with others *than to construct a good theory for yourself*; this I am bound in justice to admit, and every honest and impartial dissenter will unite with me in saying, that our *system* is not devoid of *practical mischief*, however beautiful it looks in theory.” (Binney’s Life of Morell, p. 279.) Another dissent-

ing minister also accounts for the disorders of independent churches from the nature of the system itself. "For the affairs of such a society to proceed with success, in perfect consistency with the theory, much more wisdom and virtue are required in the mass of the people, than where the *few* appoint without any popular appeal, and the many *obey* without any sentiment but that of simple submission. *To this system itself*, which requires so much in so many, it is not to be denied, that such evils as those to which the preceding pages refer, are, at times, to be attributed. In a number of persons of various rank, education, and capacity, a great difference of opinion must be expected on some subjects of general discussion; and when that happens to be one on which much interest and feeling are excited, one on which that portion of power which each possesses is to be employed, alas! *human nature* is too weak not to be in danger of betraying itself, under such circumstances, by some symptoms of imbecility, passion, or impertinence. The theory is beautiful as a speculation, and it would be equally so in fact, if *men* were equally perfect as the system itself." (Ibid. pp. 288, 289.) It too frequently happens, that the ignorant, the voluble, and the conceited, are the most forward; an opinion once expressed by such, becomes a pledge for *invincible pertinacity*. It is difficult to say, I am mistaken; and some, rather than say it, will persevere, determined to succeed in any point, by any means." (p. 299.)

Mr. James also, whose confessions we have, in part, recorded in a preceding page, has further acknowledged—"It will be known by all who read

the account which the reviewer has extracted from my book, that the schisms which sometimes exist in our churches may be traced, in great part at least, to the popular mode of electing our ministers." (James, Dissent and the Church, p. 53.)

And the same kind of reflection is cast on the popular election of ministers by other equally intelligent members of the dissenting body.

The Eclectic Review says, "These are *sure indications*" that the office of the ministry "is divested of its proper dignity and legitimate attraction." (1831, p. 493.) It alludes, with regret, to the notion which reduces the office of pastor or bishop of a christian church, to that of a *mere chairman* of the society,—to "the degradation of the pastorship, and the usurpation of the whole government of the church "by the laity," the "lord brethren." (Ibid. p. 482.) A writer in the Congregational Magazine deems it necessary to prove, that christian ministers are not *strictly and literally servants of their churches!* He says, "I fear the office of the minister is very far from being accurately understood, or its claims to respect scripturally admitted; and that the term *servant*, as it is *frequently* applied to him, is foreign to its sense in the word of God; and that in respect to the people, it often fosters feelings, and prompts conduct which cannot be observed without sentiments of indignant reprobation." He then proceeds to refute the erroneous notion, and asks, in conclusion, "Can churches in which the people and the pastor have so completely *changed places* from the apostolical, be apostolical?" (1829, pp. 364—368.)

I pity most heartily men of any liberal sentiments

placed under such degrading circumstances; and I hope that I may contribute to supply them, in the course of this work, with such arguments as may disenchant them of the idea of beauty in the theory, and effect their emancipation.

With regard to the political character of dissent in its ambition to sever the connexion of the episcopal church and the state, it must not be concealed nor dissembled, that *if* the establishment of that church is in accordance with the will of God, and *if* the kings of England be disposed to maintain that establishment, then the dissenters, in opposition to their monarchs in this respect, are not submitting to their kings as supreme, (1 Pet. ii. 13,) but are dividing a kingdom against itself, by a guilty complication of resisting "the powers that be" (Rom. xiii. 1, 2,) on earth, and the Spirit that be in heaven.

It is impossible to omit, in this place, a few remarks in reply to a Discourse lately published under the auspices of the London Congregational Union, entitled, "Dissent not Schism." The great object of the sermon is to prove, that the separation from the Church of England by nonconformists is justifiable, as it was justifiable in its origin, and as the causes which produced it are still in existence. Its origin is traced to the resignation of their livings by about two thousand ministers in the reign of Charles the

Second. These ministers were called upon to subscribe and declare in favour of the church Prayer-book, under penalty of being deprived in case of refusal. The argument in their defence is, that they were thus *forced* to separate from the church. There is very much to censure in the discourse besides its conclusion : but its conclusion is all that I am particularly concerned about, and its conclusion I most directly deny. It will consist with the design of this treatise, to point out such arguments as prove that the afore-mentioned two thousand were not forced, and were not justified to separate ; that they erred in judgment in so doing ; and that if this *were* the origin of dissent in this country, that separation was neither justifiable at that time, nor has since been at any subsequent period. If there were cause for it then, there is the same cause now ; and if it exists now, it existed then, for the Prayer-book has been the same. I will prove that a good and sufficient cause for separation had no existence in the case of the two thousand ejected ministers, and has been equally imaginary with those who have been encouraged by their example.

CHAPTER V.

THE CHURCH TO BE INSTRUCTED THROUGH THE
INSTRUMENTALITY OF MINISTERS OF THE WORD.

IF there be one point which can be assumed as common ground to churchmen and to dissenters professing the religion of Christ, it may be supposed to be the indispensableness of a ministry to the existence of a complete church for the performance of sacred rites and the exposition of Scripture. Such an order of men is evidently instituted in the word of God, and the institution has been preserved without interruption in the apostolic and every succeeding age. But what is more to our purpose in the dispute with dissenters believing in the Scriptures, they all countenance the institution of a ministry by their practice. Though all do not approve the administration of sacraments, yet there are none, I believe, who do not enjoy pastoral instruction. But notwithstanding this outward evidence of facts, there is an appearance of such contradiction and inconsistency occasionally in theory, that it is prudent to guard against laxity and error of opinion, by a strict assertion of our proposition.

We will briefly advert to the arguments for the establishment of a ministry, and slightly notice those declarations of dissenters which have rendered this precaution expedient and useful.

That the unbeliever is to be converted partly by ministerial agency, is a fact too evident to be questioned: the whole system of evangelizing the world proceeds upon it. It was by the ministry of the Saviour himself, and of his forerunner John the Baptist, that the light of the gospel first shone forth in its splendour. The Apostles were appointed to carry the lamp of truth to their own countrymen, and afterwards to the benighted heathen: and it was the command of the divine Founder of our religion that the gospel should be preached to every creature. But it is not only to the conversion of men that the labours of a ministry are intended to be exclusively directed; they are designed equally for the edification of the faithful. And the design is strongly marked on the pages of Scripture, and clearly perceptible in the practice of the church from its institution downwards. The canonical Epistles are all examples of instruction afforded by christian teachers to those who had been converted to the faith; and they contain many revelations of the purpose of the Saviour being in accordance with such a practice. It will be sufficient, on a point so undisputed, to adduce some of the most striking passages. One which for its pertinency well deserves a foremost rank, is contained in Eph. iv. "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some

pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, but may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." The passages in Rom. xii. 3—8, and 1 Cor. xii. 28, 29, are of a kindred character. The different ministerial functionaries there referred to are evidently represented as labourers in the vineyard of the church. "I say to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching, &c." "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, &c." There cannot be a question that the elders spoken of in Acts xx. 28, and in 1 Pet. v. 2, were instructors of the converted. They were overseers or bishops of the church, who were to feed their flocks and the church of God which he hath purchased with his blood. Equally impossible is it to

entertain a doubt of Timothy and Titus being designed to further in the knowledge of the gospel congregations and individuals who had professed their belief in the Saviour of mankind. "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things," says St. Paul to the former (Tim. iv. 6), "thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ." And the second chapter and part of the third of the Epistle to Titus consist almost entirely of charges respecting the topics of his doctrine to the churches in Crete. The same Epistles, more particularly the first addressed to Timothy, bear very unequivocal testimony to the functions of a bishop or overseer of the people as pastor of the lambs of Christ. A bishop was to be "apt to teach, and one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity. For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" 1 Tim. iii. 2, 4, 5, and Heb. xiii. 7, 17: 1 Thess. v. 12: 1 Cor. xvi. 16, are all so many evidences of the word being ministered to the saints, and of the attention and respect that are due from them to those who thus provide them with spiritual sustenance. "Remember them who have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow.—Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines.—Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls as they that must give account." (Heb. xiii. 17.) "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them highly in love for their work's sake." (1 Thess.

with apparent inconsistency, as they are all hearers of ministrations) are much addicted to the protestation, that they look for instruction or edification, only to the Lord. The passages which have been quoted in this chapter from Scripture amply prove that instruction in righteousness, according to the will of the Lord, is to be in some degree received through the agency of man. Add to this, it is proclaimed as one of the three great principles of nonconformity, that every man has an *unlimited* and inalienable right to expound the word of God for himself, and to worship God according to the dictates of his "own conscience." (Mr. J. Angell James, p. 10. Dissent and Church.) And this avowal proceeds from the pen of one who is deeply impressed with the magnitude of the ministerial office. He goes even farther than churchmen probably on the point. The minister of the church has, I apprehend, a desire rather to lead his people than to rule them. I do not impute to this writer an ambition to "lord it over God's heritage;" but in one of his works, as we have already seen, he laments the imperfections in his scheme of ministry, with a force and feeling which strikingly declare his ideas of the ministerial rights. (See p. 42, 43.) One does not clearly perceive the justice of the author, in complaining of much of this treatment from men whom he himself acknowledges to have an *unlimited* right to expound Scripture for themselves. The profession of the unlearned, as to looking only to the Lord, and the assertion of the literary dissenter of the unlimited right of the people to be their own interpreters, might almost have been left to confutation, from the

practice of the one, and the lament of the other. I have, however, deemed it prudent to establish our position more argumentatively. And to return to the point: the church admits most readily, advocates most vehemently, the right of the people to search the Scriptures, and to learn from them to the best of their ability. But the conclusions to be drawn most particularly from this chapter are, that the right of the people to expound Scripture for themselves is not so unqualified as to exempt them from the duty of attending to the arguments and the advice of men appointed to the ministry of the word; that a church is not complete without such an order of teachers; and that one of the designs of its institution is the guidance of the people into religious truth.

CHAPTER VI.

OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT.

If men were allowed by any philosophy of the world to decide for themselves, independently of human authority, what is the sense of Scripture on various disputed points, according to the knowledge which they may chance to possess at the time of their decision, it would no doubt be extremely pleasing to nature, it would flatter our self-sufficiency, and gratify our pride; but at the same time it would be extremely presumptuous and unwarrantable. It would in the first place be inconsistent with the institution of an order of teachers, a ministry of the word; and in the next, it would inevitably result in much dissension and error.

Let it be well understood and remembered, that notwithstanding this may be a tenet of the church, she does not deny the use of private judgment in its right sense. She always addresses her members as men of understanding; and requires them to deliberate and to judge of the excellence of her doctrines and the validity of her claims on their respect, in the hope that they will judge favourably

of her pretensions. If at any time there are those among the people who are not prepared to receive the words of any of her ministers, let the dissentient hearers dispute amicably with their instructor, as much as is necessary, remembering however that the minister ought to know better than themselves, and approaching him with some degree of diffidence in their own opinions, and of respect for the sacredness of the office which he sustains, and for the education of mind which it properly implies. Let the questions in debate, or the objections which offer, be sufficiently discussed, and then let judgment be pronounced on the truer side. All that the church condemns in private judgment is what any reasonable man must allow she has a right to condemn—that the people should determine for themselves before they have the means of determining right—the knowledge necessary to qualify them to make a final decision. All men at any time are entitled to *think* according to the best information they possess. But there are various kinds and degrees of ignorance. The literary dissenter must be among the first to acknowledge that there are multitudes of unlearned persons whose minds are not prepared to form a correct judgment on many religious subjects. It must be well known that no man can judge truly without good information; that even the best information will not always enable a man to make a wise and just determination; still that knowledge in all, and much knowledge in many cases, is indispensable. In reason, all men, with whatever knowledge they may have acquired, however perverse, have a right to form an opinion,

but not to decide and determine for truth. Such men must determine wrong according to their consciences, and no man can have a right to determine that falsehood is truth, and that truth is falsehood. The church wishes her members to judge definitively for themselves, but she desires them first to acquire sound and sufficient knowledge to enable them to judge aright.

The principle of private judgment to be condemned, is that with which we opened this chapter,—that which allows any man, at any time, to determine theological questions, solely on the knowledge which he actually possesses. That this is inconsistent with the guidance of ministerial instruction, must be evident. It also leads directly to endless dissension and error. That it naturally conduces to dissension, a few observations will elucidate.

The persons who determine in the manner under consideration, think in any particular way, (supposing they exercise their discretion to the best of their ability,) because there are certain ideas in their minds which appear to them to warrant the opinion; they judge, in short, as well as they can, according to their knowledge. Now it is almost as certain as possible, that no two persons living are exactly alike in knowledge, in information, and experience. There may be many not exceedingly unlike in intellectual attainments throughout the world, and even some in the same neighbourhood; still it is probable that in a very circumscribed space there are many whose acquirements are very unequal, both in their quality and extent. It is almost impossible but that such men, at least, will differ, more or less, on almost any

but the most simple question that is submitted to them, particularly of a religious nature, if they decide according to their own ability ; and as there may be imagined innumerable degrees in existence of mental neglect or improvement, it is not possible to conceive a more fruitful source of difference in opinion, than the principle which justifies every man's being determined entirely by whatever knowledge he may possess on the instant of decision. In a large population it may not be necessary, in order to accommodate private opinion, to form a very great number of different societies. Though no two persons shall exactly agree on all points, yet the differences among men in every district may not be so wide, that they shall not be able to mark all the broadest distinctions by the boundaries of a few associations ; and members of individual societies may be contented to differ, in many slight degrees, without desiring separation ; still broad distinctions requiring division will probably arise, and sometimes on points of the greatest importance. Thus if men are furnished with much diversity of knowledge, as is the case, and if they are to determine for themselves according to their knowledge, it is quite impossible but that there must be much dissension ; and where there is much dissension, there must be much error.

And this is the principle of private judgment, as far as I can possibly understand, on which the separatists from the church decide. Their distinctive opinions and practices, if formed and maintained on conviction ; the religious dissensions and animosities, noticed in our last chapter but one, are evidently the result of every man's following his own notions of

right and wrong, truth and error. I do not mean by his own notions, that every dissenter forms his opinions of doctrine and duty, without any guidance whatever from his fellow-creatures ; that he is never influenced by the opinions of others ; nor do I intend to say that there are no dissenters who owe much of what is true in their faith, and scriptural in their worship, to the example of the established church ; but I am speaking now solely of their differences from the establishment, and I would be understood merely to signify, that these differences from her and among themselves, as they proceed from conviction, must originate from ideas which the dissenters have obtained from various sources, independent of church authority ; and these ideas, thus variously obtained, I denominate their own. Amidst all the disagreement on religious matters in this country, every sincere man holds his opinions because he believes them, according to his ideas of truth, to be true. Men judge for themselves, and they judge for themselves agreeably to the knowledge and the impressions which they perceive in their own minds ; at the time they form their determinations. It cannot be doubted that this is the general principle on which the conscientious dissenter uses his private judgment. Let the question be put only to our common sense ; how it happens, throughout this kingdom, that one man holds one article of faith, a second, another ; a third, another still ; that different doctrines are taught and believed ; that men separate into divers sects ; that contradictory and inconsistent doctrines concerning Christianity, and even the denial of revelation itself, have obtained ;

that, in short, men believe the Scriptures in any way they please, or, if they think it better, renounce belief in them altogether?—and it will answer immediately, that the people have, in many instances, depended on such knowledge as they possessed, however slender or however perverse, as the materials of decision; that they have decided according to their own ideas of true and false, good and evil: and from dependence on private judgment under such circumstances, have proceeded all kinds of infidelity, as well as every species of Christianity. And the dissenting believers in Scripture have avowed that it is *their* principle. Mr. James has laid it down, as one of the few principles of nonconformity, that every man has an unlimited and inalienable right to expound the word of God for himself, and to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience. Another celebrated writer objects to episcopacy on the same ground. He says it is “inconsistent with the fundamental principle of Protestantism, which is, that the Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants; that, in accordance with this principle, one man or one body of men, examining that Bible for themselves, have just as good a right as others to say, with respect to the church, what was, or what was not, the primitive institution. The Bible is the exclusive rule and law of the church; it is also the universal property of the people: these things bring the whole question respecting christian truth, human duty, and church government, not to the independent fancies and capricious conceits of individual men, but to the testimony of Scripture, and the declaration of God. They bid every man, and every body

of men, to be silent as regards dictation to their fellows, and command all to listen with equal reverence to what is equally spoken to all of them from the throne. They require them to search, and permit them to determine, what is, or what is not, the meaning of the rule; and they sanction them in peaceably and charitably acting on their own convictions." (Binney's Dissent not Schism.)

It is impossible to transcribe a passage from an eminent nonconformist, so replete with error, without giving it some notice. He teaches, that any man examining the Bible for himself, has just as good a right as another to say, with respect to the church, what was, or what was not, the primitive institution. According to this doctrine, the most ignorant of those persons who can read the Bible, have just as good a right to say what was the primitive church as Mr. Binney, or as any men whose minds are the most richly stored with ecclesiastical knowledge. Not only indeed is the most uninformed of such readers entitled to decide with respect to the church, but the whole question respecting christian truth and human duty, as well as church government, equally with those who have made the most profound and extensive inquiries into these subjects, with whatever intellectual and spiritual talents. He most completely confounds ignorance and knowledge. And this he calls not bringing the questions to the independent fancies and capricious conceits of individual men,—when, in fact, it is that identical act in the highest perfection. Again: what he affirms of every man being silent as regards dictation, and all listening with equal reverence, and all determining

for themselves ; virtually prohibits himself from ever again ascending the pulpit to admonish or instruct any more uninformed reader of the Bible than himself, and overturns the institution of a ministry of the word, which his Saviour in His wisdom deemed it right to establish.

But our chief business at the present moment lies not with these melancholy fallacies, and this inconsistency, but rather with the principle of private judgment which the passage declares. It perfectly agrees with that which we deduced from observation on the dissenter's practice. The principle of private judgment, then, among nonconformists, is both constructively and avowedly such as we have described, and one which in its very nature immediately produces, as a matter of course, dissension as unlimited in kind and degree, as the passions and ignorance, the folly of the human race.

If conscience were a safe and certain guide for every man, there might be some justification of this principle, in despite of its consequences. It would appear that some persons are so ill informed as to entertain of conscience that opinion. Such should be instructed, that conscience signifies a conviction which a man experiences of what is good and evil, true and false, right and wrong ; that if he misunderstands ; if he thinks any thing to be true which is false, or to be false which is true ; if he puts bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter ; if he mistakes right and wrong in any instances ; that, in those instances, his conscience is erroneous,—his conscience, in such cases, would lead him, if it were followed, into error. But one example from Scrip-

ture may establish the point in the most satisfactory manner. There was a time when, as St. Paul informs us, "he verily thought with himself, that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." (Acts xxvi. 9.) And he did oppose Christ in much of his conduct. It is quite evident that he acted agreeably to his conscience at the time. Nothing can more expressively declare the dictate of conscience, than the words "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do." His conscience directed him to hale the Christians to prison, and to sentence them to death. His conscience moved him to take his last infidel journey to Damascus. At least a man may verily think with himself, that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Conscience, therefore, is not in itself necessarily a safe conductor; and the principle of private judgment, as laid down by dissenters, is liable to the charge of all the heterodoxy existing among their discordant sects, and of inconsistency with the divine appointment of a ministry of the word.

It may be observed in this place, that only separatists are, in these days, abusing private judgment, but also that the poison of their principle has infected nominal adherents of the establishment. The number is considerable of those who profess attachment to the church, but are unwilling to show that respect to the opinions of a learned ministry which is due to them from persons less qualified to determine re-

Religious questions. This observation applies particularly to matters of practice. The thousands who live in profaneness and profligacy, whether nominally in the church or without it, all act on the principle of their own private judgment. A spurious private judgment is, in fact, the root of all the infidelity and wickedness, as well as the commonly called dissent, of the land. Heaven grant the labours of the ministry of the church may lay to it that axe which hews down all unrighteousness !

It also deserves further remark, that Mr. Binney has written, that "the Scriptures bid every man, and every body of men, to be silent as regards dictation to their fellows. They permit all to determine what is, or what is not, the meaning of the rule, and they sanction them in peaceably and charitably acting on their own conviction." What right then, it may be asked, have he and his brethren to entertain such intentions against churchmen as are expressed in the following menace? "The dissolution of the existing antichristian alliance between church and state, is the object at which dissenters will aim, and aim at on serious, sacred, religious grounds. This, however much it may include, is that one thing which in the coming conflict will be sought by them." (Binney's Address, p. 63.) On his own principles he is disobeying Scripture. He and his fellows are "to be silent as regards dictation : " churchmen, believing that the alliance in question is agreeable to

the will of God as deducible from the Scripture, are to determine what is, or what is not, the meaning of their rule; and are peaceably and charitably to unite with the state, acting on their own conviction.

CHAPTER VII.

THE OBJECTIONS OF DISSENTERS TO THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, AS TO THE INSTITUTION OF ITS MINISTRY.

WHATEVER may be the union that ought to subsist among the Christians of this country, that the Church of England is that body in which it is their duty to associate, appears to the dissenter the most palpable absurdity. The reasons for not uniting with the Church of England are extremely numerous. It shall be our business to enumerate, at least, the principal, together with the arguments by which they are defended.

SECTION I.

To commence with some of the graver objections, and to proceed to others of less importance, a very eminent station must be assigned to the first objection which we shall notice, on account of the numbers by whom it is entertained. There are, it appears, multitudes of uneducated persons in the kingdom, who believe that human learning is not at

all requisite to the acquirement of true evangelical knowledge, otherwise than by preaching, or to the power of communicating it to others. They despise scholarship in ministers, as the purchase of silver and gold, and maintain that no other learning is wanted than that which is imparted to their preachers by the direct and immediate influence of the Spirit. They hold that the most unlearned men may be called and taught by the Spirit to preach, as well as, or even better than, those who have been instructed by education. The arguments on which they found their belief are professedly drawn from Scripture, from the precedent afforded by the Apostles, and from the declaration of St. Peter on the great day of Pentecost. The Apostles, they contend, were unlearned men, and therefore it accords with Scripture that the unlearned may preach the gospel. The conclusion is to them no less obvious, that the ministerial labours of the unlearned are the work of God, because it is written, (Acts ii. 17,) *that in the last days our sons and daughters were to prophesy.* They see this prophecy being fulfilled every day in the ministry of the ignorant, both male and female, through the length and breadth of the land. Another sure ground of confidence in the divinity of their proceedings is supplied by the success of their ministers in obtaining multitudes of followers. They profess to bring again the authority of the word of God. It is written, say they, of preaching, (Acts v. 38, 39,) "If this counsel, or this work, be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it." In this passage they distinctly perceive that their ministry is divine, on

account of its defying all attempts at overthrow by its fast and far spreading influence. From all which it immediately follows, in their judgment, that the claims of a learned clergy are fallacies and impostures. These are all the objections of the illiterate which I will produce for the present. To a certain extent, these arguments are supported by the educated among the Society of Friends, as far as concerns the dispensableness of learning, and supported on much the same grounds as by others destitute of literary attainments. (See Gurney's Religious Peculiarities of Friends, pp. 172 — 174.) This makes them more considerable. We turn now to arguments of another kind.

SECTION II.

It ought to be well understood that there are three orders of ministry in the Church of England, called bishops, priests, and deacons;—that we maintain that these three orders are derived to us from the Apostles;—that the bishops are appointed to admit men into the ministry; to ordain ministers to congregations; and are likewise superior to priests and deacons in rank; and are intended to regulate church affairs.

One of the weightiest accusations of dissenters against the church, is its alleged opposition to Scripture in its episcopacy and prelacy. They denounce our order of bishops as unscriptural, in both their office of ordainers, and in their superiority as governors. First, as to their right of ordaining. They argue that it is the right of congregations to make

and choose pastors for themselves; and they ground their opinion on the three authorities alluded to in our second chapter—reason, the Scripture, and the practice of the primitive Christians. Their arguments shall be stated on the three heads in that particular order.

One of them, of great celebrity, writes thus:—
 “Surely, of *his* opinions who is to teach me doctrines which are to decide my eternal destiny, I ought to be allowed to judge, as well as of *his* conduct who is to be my example.” (Mr. James, p. 54.) The author of the Protestant Dissenter’s Catechism (a book which had run through nineteen editions in 1831) p. 59, Q. 101, asks, “How do dissenters think that congregations should be supplied with ministers?” The answer given is, “They think that no person whatsoever is authorized to impose a minister upon others, but that every congregation has a right to choose its own.” The next question is, (Q. 102,) “How do they vindicate this opinion?” to which it is answered, “It seems as reasonable that all persons should choose their own ministers, as their own lawyers or physicians. An imposition in the former case is indeed as much more unreasonable than in the latter, as the interests of the soul are more important than those of the body.” “But (Q. 103,) are the people proper judges of a minister’s qualifications?—In general they may be supposed as good judges for themselves, in this case, as the patrons of livings are for them who are often utter strangers to the parishioners.” (Palmer’s Catechism, by Newman.) A writer of equal or even higher authority expresses himself as follows: “To the *common and just* plea,

that every man has as good right to choose his own pastor, to whom to commit the care of his soul, as to choose his lawyer or his physician with whom he entrusts his body or estate, it is replied, &c. But every man surely is as capable, and has as undoubted a right, to judge and to choose what minister to attend for the edification of his soul, as what physician to consult for the recovery of his health." (Towgood, pp. 89, 90.)

This, it appears, is the common reasoning of dissenters, supported by their leading authorities. The eminent Mr. Conder, one of whose particular merits, according to Mr. James, is the philosophy of his sentiments, does not, that I can recollect, insist upon precisely the same arguments as the author of the Catechism, Mr. James, and Mr. Towgood. His argument, from reason, assumes an appearance of much more depth and solidity. He first attempts the use of reason, for the purpose of invalidating or annulling the right of bishops to ordain. "Every faithful preacher of the gospel," he writes, "in fulfilling the will of Christ, claims to be considered as invested with a necessary *ministerial authority*,—an authority simply resulting from the message which he promulgates, and the command which he fulfils,—an authority distinct from whatsoever has its source in the will of man, and, attaching to whomsoever, as the bearer of the evangelical message, we may regard as the organ of Christ. When, in the purity of his doctrines, the success of his labours, and the unblemished tenor of his life, a christian teacher exhibits the appropriate credentials of the ministerial character, these invest him with an authority to which human appointment can impart no validity.

“ False views of the *source* of the authority vested in the christian minister, have led some writers to argue, that as the magistrate is not a self-constituted officer, as mere ability confers no right to act in any political capacity, but his commission must be regularly obtained from the source of civil power : so it is subversive of the interests of the church to allow of the legitimacy of a self-constituted ministry, or to admit that mere sufficiency gives a man authority to set up as a public teacher of what he really knows.

Self-constituted implies the not being constituted by the authority competent to legitimate and appoint : in this general sense we may safely unite in deprecating a self-constituted ministry. But the question is, whether human appointment is the source of spiritual authority, as it is of civil power. The Apostles were not self-constituted ; yet man had no share in their appointment : they were constituted apostles by Jesus Christ. There is a preliminary point then to be ascertained, *what* constitutes a christian minister ? The qualifications for the exercise of political functions are communicated in the power conferred. Are the qualifications of a christian minister derivable from a similar source ? We maintain that they are of a purely spiritual character ; that the authority vested in the preacher of the gospel is derived immediately from the message which he publishes under the warrant of Christ ; that the credentials of this authority are to be sought for in the correspondence of his ministerial labours to the dictates of inspired truth, by which he commends himself to every man's conscience as in the sight of God ; and that

this spiritual magistracy is not transmitted by commissions issuing from any human authority, but has its source in the supreme fountain of power and dominion in heaven and on earth. *He* alone can constitute and appoint his faithful ministers who has the omniscience requisite for that purpose. The self-constituted minister is the man whom he has not appointed; to whom his word affords no warrant; whose commission is the forgery of human wisdom, and is not obtained from the legitimate source from which all spiritual qualifications emanate.

Truth, by whomsoever it is promulgated, cannot but possess the same intrinsic authority. The fact that an individual does or does not preach the truth of Christ, cannot be made to depend upon any hypothesis respecting his having or his not having the right to preach it; if he preaches the gospel, the fact is placed beyond dispute, that he is competent to the exercise of the christian ministry; and what is there that can be interposed between the competency and the right? The advocates of ecclesiastical restrictions proceed upon the supposition, that the self-constituted teacher is possessed of the requisite knowledge, the moral competency; nevertheless, his right and his authority are represented as dependent on human appointment. If however, as we believe, this authority is of a purely spiritual nature, and the preaching of the gospel is one of those religious actions which are not subject to magisterial control; while we deny that any man is morally qualified to preach simply *because* he chooses, we affirm that he ought to be at liberty to preach if he chooses—that

he ought to be laid under no political restraint. The usurpation of the sacred office by incompetent persons, is an evil which the interposition of ecclesiastical restrictions is but ill adapted to mitigate." (Conder on Protest. Nonconformity, book ii. chap. ii. § 8, On the source of ministerial authority.)

In a subsequent part of his work, he makes the following observations on the choice of ministers by the people.

"The connexion between a pastor and his flock being of a purely spiritual nature, and not a political relation, it must needs be the result of reciprocal consent and choice; it cannot, for any spiritual purposes, originate in the decisions of a foreign authority." (book ii. ch. ii. § 14.) "Opposed to this, there can exist no right in another man that interferes with the free exercise of mine. No man can have an inherent natural right, or derive from the civil authority a political right, to be received by an individual, or by a body of individuals, in the capacity of a spiritual instructor. His claim to be so received must be of a moral nature, must arise from his qualifications and character; and the corresponding obligations must likewise be moral, not political.

"This natural right of every Christian to choose his spiritual instructor, attached to every individual member of the primitive churches not less than to the Christians in the present day, and the voluntary nature of their association, prevented any infringement of this right; but there did not then exist the same occasion for its exercise. There was not, in the first place, the same diversity of doctrine in the church of

Christ as now imposes upon every Christian the necessity of discriminating between truth and error. There were indeed false teachers even in those times, against whom the disciples were exhorted to be on their guard; but to them were opposed the clear injunctions of apostolic authority. The character of christian ministers was moreover frequently attested by sanctions which left no room for hesitation as to receiving them in that capacity.

Where then, it may be asked, resides the right or power, and in what consists the importance, of ordination? It is not the source of ministerial authority, for that, as I have endeavoured to show, does not and cannot rest on any human foundation. It does not admit to the pastoral office; for even in the national church the title to office, which is an indispensable prerequisite, is derived from the nomination of the person who has the disposal of the cure. It is not office, but qualification for office, which episcopal ordination is supposed to convey in those solemn words used by the ordaining bishop, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost.' What then is ordination? The answer is—A becoming solemnity, adopted from the Jewish customs by the primitive church, significant of the separation of an individual to some specific appointment in the christian ministry, and constituting both a recognition on the part of the officiating presbyters of the ministerial character of the person appointed, and a decent sanction of the proceedings of the church." (Book ii. ch. ii. § 14, 15. See also Palmer's Protest. Diss. Cat., Part II. Q. 29. in which he declares that ordainers pretend to no authority to constitute men pastors, that being derived solely from Christ and the choice of the people.)

Such is the reasoning of dissenters on the right of the people to appoint their own ministers.

SECTION III.

From the reason of the case, we pass on to Scripture. The following extracts exhibit the essence of Mr. Towgood's arguments from this source. "The charge given to the christian people to take heed what they hear, to beware of false prophets, not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits, incontestably proves them to have a right of judgment and of choice relating to this matter, and that this right which God has given them, it is their duty to use. When an apostle was to be chosen in the room of Judas the traitor, the whole body of the disciples were applied to on that occasion, (Acts i.) who appointed, by common suffrage, two from their whole number to be candidates for that office. (v. 23.) The seven deacons likewise were appointed by the brethren. 'Wherefore, brethren, look ye out amongst you, seven men of honest report; and the saying pleased the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen and Philip,' &c. Can words be more express?" (Towgood, pp. 87, 88.)

The same arguments are advanced by the author of the Protestant Diss. Catechism, Part II. Q. 106. The only additional remark which he makes of any material importance, refers to the caution of taking heed as to what was heard. He pronounces this inconsistent with a submission to those as their spiritual guides whom other persons impose upon them.

Other authors of modern times, and of the highest rank among dissenters, are not convinced that *examples* of ministers being elected by the people are discoverable in Scripture: still they contend for the privilege on precisely the same grounds—reason, Scripture, and the usage of the primitive church. “The right and practice of the people to choose their pastors are clearly deducible from the records of the New Testament. True it is, that we have no express mention of a case in which it is said that the people chose them; but as the people are everywhere represented in the Acts of the Apostles as, in whole or in part, the elective body in all other matters, they are of course to be considered as having the right to elect in this matter also. The people chose the two disciples to be presented to the Lord, as candidates for the vacancy in the Apostolic College. (Acts. i. 15—26.) The people chose the seven deacons. (Acts vi.) The people joined in the deliberations and decisions of the council at Jerusalem on the subject of circumcision, and the decree resulting from that council went forth in their name also, joined with the names of the Apostles and elders. (Acts xv. 23.) Surely then their right to choose their pastors, even without a special precedent, may be fairly deduced from the general principle. We are commanded to try the spirits whether they be of God; to beware of false prophets; not to receive into our houses, or bid God speed, to any who brings false doctrine; to take heed what we hear. From such injunctions as these, the right of the people to choose their own ministers may be justly inferred; for without such a right, it would

be impossible to find any meaning in the command, or any power in the people to obey it." (James, *Dissent and Church*, pp. 53, 54.)

The arguments of Mr. Conder are reduced by a similar conviction to even narrower limits. "It is readily admitted," he says, "that dissenting controvertists, in attempting to make good every part of their system, have occupied positions hazardous, if not untenable, and that divine right and scriptural law have been on all sides too eagerly pressed into the service of hypothesis. An instance of this occurs in the stress injudiciously laid upon those precedents in the New Testament, which are usually held to be in favour of the right of the people to elect their own pastors. The truth is, that the circumstances attending the formation of many of the primitive churches, did not allow of such a right being called into exercise; nevertheless, that the ordination of pastors by the Apostles never took place without the consent of the people, is the admission of Doctor Barrow and other learned episcopal writers.

"Whatever be the ostensible source of a minister's official claims as regards his appointment by man, (and into this individuals may not feel themselves concerned to examine,) of his character, his conduct, his doctrine, they are commanded to take account, to bring them to the test of the law and the testimony. We are to try the spirits whether they are of God; to search the Scriptures whether the things declared unto us be so; to beware of false prophets. These are duties of personal and universal obligation, and upon these considerations rest both the validity

and the importance of the right for which we contend, as arising out of the very nature of the obligation." (Book ii. chap. ii. § 14.)

These passages contain the main strength of the argument from Scripture. There is one more text upon which great stress is commonly laid by writers of distinction among our opponents, and which must therefore not be omitted. It is those words of our Saviour, uttered in reply to some who saw a man casting out devils in Christ's name, and who forbid him because he followed not with them. (St. Mark ix. 39.) It was chosen for the motto of a pamphlet by one of the most learned of the baptist communion (Kinghorn) in a controversy on episcopacy; and it stands prefixed, as the text, to the famous discourse of Mr. Binney's, entitled "Dissent not Schism." In one part of that discourse he says, "I could quote many other passages in illustration of the general argument, but I content myself with adverting to that which I have selected as my text: 'Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbid him, because he follows not with us. And Jesus said unto them, Forbid him not.'" And the observations of Mr. Conder on the same passage show how convenient he esteems it to the support of the schismatic cause. "Our Lord's reply stands on record as a reproof of the officious zeal of those, who in a similar spirit of worldly wisdom and sectarian policy would impose on the church, laws which Christ has not imposed; and exclude from the ministry those whom He has not excluded. 'Forbid him not; for he that is not against us, is for us.'"

SECTION IV.

We proceed to the arguments of dissenters against ordination by bishops from the writings of the apostolic fathers, with which we close their objections on this head.

These arguments are extremely few. Towgood has this passage: "Clemens Romanus, one of the apostolic fathers, says, they appointed bishops by the consent of the whole church. (Epist. ad Cor. cap. xlv.—Towgood's Letters to White. p. 198.) Mr. James refers his readers to a passage of the same father, on the authority of Barrow, that the Apostles did not ordain pastors over the churches without the consent of the people. (Dissent and Church p. 54.) The same writer affirms that the mode of the popular election of bishops prevailed in the early ages of the christian history; adding, that if any episcopalians entertain any doubt on the subject, they may consult the first and second chapters of the fourth book of Bingham's Antiquities of the Christian Church. They must, if they please, dispose of that very learned authority before they can expect us to relinquish so natural, useful, and ancient a right. We can defend it from Scripture and their own most established authorities." (Page 54, note.)

Such are the arguments of our opponents against the church on the subject of episcopal ordination; derived from the three sources of reason, Scripture, and primitive practice.

Connected with this branch of our inquiry is the prelacy of our bishops, or their precedency of rank

and authority over the other orders of priest and deacon. We make this the fifth division of our subject, and subjoin the objections.

SECTION V.

The course commonly pursued in this matter, is to deny the existence of more than two orders of ministers in the apostolic churches, and to assert the independence of congregations.

The first writer whom I shall cite in this instance, is Mr. James. As reason appears not to have been made the basis of any arguments in this case, I proceed at once to Scripture. Our author seems perfectly satisfied that "the New Testament mentions only two kinds of officers as belonging to the church of Christ." "The question at issue between the episcopalians and dissenters is, whether there are three kinds of permanent church officers mentioned in the New Testament, or only two. The prelatists contend for three; the latter affirm that there are only bishops and deacons. By bishops are meant the same officers as in other places are called elders, pastors, or rulers, i. e. teachers of religion having the care of a single congregation. The naked question between us is, whether bishops and elders be the same officers: now that the affirmative of this question is true, is as clear to me as that either of them is mentioned in the word of God.

"Let us examine the celebrated passage in the twentieth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles; at the seventeenth verse it is said, 'And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.'

They came, and Paul addressed to them the affecting charge contained in the latter part of the chapter. At the twenty-eighth verse he says, 'Take heed, therefore, (ye elders) unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers,' (*episcopous*). The English reader should understand, that the Greek word for *overseers* is *bishops*, and so it ought unquestionably to have been translated. If it be the same persons that are called elders who are addressed as bishops, it proves that the words are convertible, as designating the same office." Mr. James means that St. Paul called elders or presbyters, bishops; and that therefore bishops were only elders or presbyters in the scriptural use of the word, that is, merely pastors of single congregations.

"The Apostle, in writing to the church at Philippi, begins his Epistle thus: 'Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.' Here mention is made of bishops, but nothing is said of elders,—there is no allusion whatever to a third order. Why? Because it may fairly be presumed there was none. Would the Apostle have mentioned deacons, an inferior order, and omitted elders, if there had been elders as distinct from bishops?

"If we refer to the Epistles of Paul to Timothy and Titus, we shall find proofs equally conclusive that the two terms designate the same office. No mention is made in his Epistle to Timothy, where he states the qualifications of church officers, of any third order: bishops and deacons are specified, but

not a word is said of elders. If elders were a distinct office, why were they left out, and the qualifications of deacons, confessedly inferior officers, stated? But still stronger is the proof derived from the commencement of the Epistle to Titus, chap. i. 5—7. 'For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain *elders* in every city, as I had appointed thee. If any be blameless, &c. For a *bishop* must be blameless as the steward of God.' If this do not convince them, it is hopeless to attempt by demonstration itself to produce conviction. Titus was to ordain none to the *eldership* but such as were blameless, because a *bishop* must be blameless. If the terms are not convertible, where is the force of the Apostle's reasoning? It has been argued, however, by the churchman, that it appears most clearly from the holy Scriptures, that a bishop is superior to a presbyter. There is no accounting for the illusions of our mental optics. But in what part of the Scriptures is this superiority discovered? In the following: 'For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.' (Titus i. 5.) 'I besought thee still to abide at Ephesus (where were many presbyters), that thou charge some that they preach no other doctrine.' (1 Tim. i. 3, and vi. 3.) 'Against a presbyter receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.' (1 Tim. v. 19.) If then to order things left undone; if to ordain presbyters in every city; if to charge presbyters to preach sound doctrine; if to receive accusations against presbyters; if all this does not

prove, argues the churchman, that a bishop is superior to presbyters, we know not by what facts superiority can be proved, nor in what language superiority can be expressed.

“ Can the churchman be in earnest when he talks of this as most clearly proving from the Scriptures the superiority of the episcopal to the presbyterian office? We may be sure that this is all that he can find to support his position; but whether it most clearly proves his point, let any candid reader judge. *How* does it prove the point? This is not stated, but I presume the force of the proof lies in this. Timothy was a bishop, and ordained elders, and as the *ordainer* is superior to the *ordained*, therefore a bishop is superior to a presbyter. But this is an assumption—assumption all, and not *most clear proof*. It is assumed, but not proved, *that Timothy and Titus were bishops* in the usual scriptural sense of the term. Their mission was clearly of an extraordinary nature, and had little in common with the pastoral and scriptural office. Again, it is assumed that ordination necessarily infers superiority of office in him who performs it. Is this the case in the Church of England? *Virtually*, the king ordains all the bishops and archbishops; *nominally*, the dean and chapter elect; and *ceremonially*, bishops ordain bishops. If the two archbishops deceased together, who would consecrate their successors? Let the churchman's argument be resorted to for a solution of the difficulty, or rather the circle of difficulties with which he is now encompassed. Will he still maintain that the ordainer is necessarily superior to the ordained? ‘Why,’ says Milton, ‘should the per-

-formance of ordination, which is a lower office, exalt
 a prelate? Verify, neither the nature nor example
 of ordination doth any way require an equality of
 character between the ordainer and the ordained:
 for what more natural, than every like to produce
 his like; man to beget man; fire to propagate fire;
 and in example of highest opinion, the ordainer is
 inferior to the ordained; for the pope is not made by
 the precedent pope, but by cardinals, who ordain
 and consecrate to a higher and greater office than
 their own. But I refer to better authority than the
 practice of the Vatican—I mean the practice of the
 Apostles. If Timothy was a bishop, then he was
 ordained by inferiors, for he was set apart by the
 laying on of the hands of the presbytery. (1 Tim. iv. 14.)
 Paul an Apostle, and Barnabas, were ordained to
 a special mission by the prophets and teachers of the
 church at Antioch. ‘And when they had fasted and
 prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them
 away.’ (Acts xiii. 3.) What now becomes of the clear
 proof from the holy Scriptures of the superiority of
 bishops to presbyters? It must be recollected, that
 the question is not whether this distinction or su-
 periority were or were not introduced at an early
 period of the christian history, subsequently to the
 days of the Apostles, but whether they were set up
 by apostolic authority and sanction. My appeal is to
 the New Testament, and if prelacy cannot be found
 there, my argument, in all that I contend for, is
 sound; my principles and practice as a dissenter
 are justified, and the claims of the Church of England
 to an apostolic institution are shown to be unfounded.
 I admit the probability, that before the third century

closed, the distinction contended for by episcopalians existed, and so also did many other innovations and corruptions." (James's Dissent and the Church of England, pp. 42—50.)

Doctor John Pye Smith takes the same ground, on nearly the same authorities. His ninth thesis, in his Letter to Professor Lee, is this : " that the will of Christ notified in the New Testament, authorizes only two orders of ministers in the organization of churches ; the one, that of pastors, called also presbyters as a name of respect, and bishops, as a title of office ; the other, that of deacons, which is a lay office, appointed for the due administration of the temporal affairs of the church." The texts on which he builds his theory, are Acts xx. 17, 28 ; 1 Tim. iii. 1, 2, 8 ; Tit. i. 5, 9 ; Philip. i. 1. These appear to be the same as those quoted and referred to by Mr. James. The Doctor's comments are of a similar nature.

Mr. Conder's statements are as follow : " Protestant nonconformists hold that there are two distinct orders of ecclesiastical officers, and only two specified in the New Testament as having the superintendence of christian societies—bishops and deacons. By bishops, they understand the pastors, or ruling elders of the congregation : by deacons, the stewards appointed to manage the secular concerns of the church, more especially to take care of the poor." (Book ii. chap. 2, § 9.) " We now proceed to the consideration of that higher official character which we find referred to so often in the New Testament, under the titles of presbyter or elder, and overseer or bishop ; the identity of whose rank and office, is the principal subject of controversy in relation to the primitive form of ecclesiastical government.

“That the term *elder*, and the office of *bishop*, are ascribed in the New Testament to the same individuals, is a point clear beyond all dispute. The passage in the twentieth chapter of Acts, ver. 28, would be sufficient to establish this position. It is not less certain, that elders and bishops are never referred to in any one passage as coexisting different orders. We read repeatedly of the apostles, the elders, and the brethren of the church at Jerusalem. In the Epistles to Timothy and Titus also, the offices of bishop and deacon are specifically adverted to, while no mention is made of elder in the same connexion. When the title of bishop occurs, that of elder is dropped; and when the apostolic writers speak of the elders, they are silent with regard to bishops. Had there been more than two orders in the church at Philippi when St. Paul addressed to them his Epistle, it cannot be imagined that he would have omitted to specify the third in his salutation, especially since the deacons, whom he does mention, are supposed to have sustained the inferior station. Had he associated the words elder and deacon, it might have been contended, that under the former term, more than one description of officers was included; but the title of bishop is confined in its application to one. Again, when we read of elders being ordained in every church, no mention is made of there being likewise bishops appointed. Lastly, the Apostle, when specifying the requisite qualifications of a christian bishop and of a deacon, is wholly silent as to the qualifications of a presbyter.

“Bishops and deacons appear to be the only

officers recognized in the New Testament as belonging to a christian church. But the case of Timothy and Titus, which is the sheet-anchor of the advocates of episcopacy, remains to be investigated.

"Neither Timothy nor Titus appears to have been appointed to a local episcopacy; on the contrary, it appears from the sacred records, that Timothy, by the direction of the Apostle Paul, superintended, for a short time, several churches in various places. (Compare 1 Cor. iv. 17: 1 Tim. i. 3: and 1 Thess. iii. 2.) He was successively sent to Corinth, to Ephesus, and to Thessalonica, in the character of the adopted son and fellow-labourer of the Apostles.

"The charge or office of Timothy and Titus, was to do the work of an evangelist,—a work not essentially different, it may be presumed, from that which Paul and Barnabas were sent forth from the church at Antioch to discharge. To this office, whatever it involved, Timothy, we are informed, was set apart by the imposition of the hands of the presbyters; and as St. Paul, in his second Epistle, speaks of the gift of God as having been communicated to Timothy by the imposition of his own hands, we are warranted in concluding, that St. Paul himself, as one of that presbytery, assisted in his ordination. In like manner Paul and Barnabas were ordained to their mission by the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch. It evidently was not requisite that the rite of ordination should be performed by superiors in office, since an Apostle submitted to be ordained by those who cannot be considered as occupying a rank higher than that of presbyters." (Book ii. ch. ii. § 11.)

References in this argument are made by dissenters to the fathers of the first century, and particularly by Mr. James, (with apparently an obscure and incorrect allusion,) to Clement of Rome, and Polycarp. He makes these citations, in the words of Campbell, as quoted by a Doctor Fletcher.

"There are two very ancient testimonies," says Dr. Fletcher, "which I shall cite from Dr. Campbell; one of them is from the most respectable remains of christian antiquity, next to the inspired writings. The piece I allude to is the first Epistle of Clemens Romanus to the Corinthians. In this Epistle, Clement informs us that the Apostles, having preached the gospel in countries and towns, constituted the first-fruits of their ministry whom they approved by the Spirit, bishops and deacons of those who should believe. And in order to satisfy us that he did not use the word in a vague manner for church officers in general, but as expressive of all the distinct orders that were established by them in the church, he adds, 'Nor was this a new device, inasmuch as bishops and deacons had been pointed out many ages before; for thus says the Scripture, "I will constitute their bishops in righteousness, and their deacons in faith."' (Isaiah lx. 17.) If (as no critic ever questioned, and as his own argument necessarily requires,) this venerable ancient means the same by bishops with those who, in the Acts, are called presbyters or elders, namely the ordinary teachers; it would seem strange that the bishop, properly so called, the principal officer of all, should be the only one, in his account, of whom the Holy Spirit, in sacred writ, had given no previous intima-

tion: nay, do not the words of this father manifestly imply, *that any other office in the church than the two he had mentioned, might be justly styled a new device?* If the above account given by Clement is not to be considered as an enumeration, I know not what to call it. It is this writer's express design to acquaint us what the Apostles did for accommodating the several churches they planted with pastors and assistants. And can we suppose he would have omitted the chief point of all, namely, that they supplied every church with a prelate, ruler, or head, if any one had really been entitled to this distinction.

“The other testimony I shall produce is that of Polycarp, who had been a disciple of the Apostle John. He also takes notice of two orders of ministers in the church, enjoining the people (chap. v.) to be subject to their presbyters and deacons, as to God and Christ. He could go no higher for a similitude, nor could he decently have gone so high, had he known of a higher order in the church. Not a syllable of the *bishop*, as a distinct and superior officer, who, in less than a hundred and fifty years after, would have been the principal, if not the only person to whom their subjection would have been enjoined by any christian writer. Let it be observed further, that though in chap. v. he lays down the duties and qualifications of deacons, and in chap. vi. those of presbyters, where every thing befitting judges and governors is included, and through the whole Epistle those of the people, there is no mention of what is proper in the character and conduct of a bishop. It is evident that Polycarp knew of

no christian ministers superior to the presbyters." (Dr. Campbell's Lectures on Ecclesiastical History, vol. i. p. 134. Fletcher's Lectures on the Roman Catholic Religion. James's Dissent and Church of England, pp. 47, 48.)

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND VINDICATED FROM THE FOREGOING OBJECTIONS, AND ITS SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATION EXPOUNDED.

THIS chapter being intended to contain a refutation of the several classes of objections mentioned in chapter the seventh, it will be convenient to divide it into correspondent sections.

SECTION I.

Answer to some of the objections of Independents, but more particularly to others of the Society of Friends, and of the least educated among other sects.

The arguments in our fifth chapter, and the universal practice of the professors of Christianity, fully bear out the assumption, that there is no complete church in existence unprovided with a ministry of the word—a ministry designed to direct to a knowledge of the truth by teaching the Scriptures. Also the concurrence of churchmen and other nominal Christians noticed in chapter the first, authorizes our

appeal to Scripture as the rule of faith and practice ; and the contents of the second chapter are evidence of that confirmation of a true interpretation of Scripture which may be afforded by reason and the earliest uninspired authorities. We have also seen in chapter the third the great and acknowledged importance of preaching the gospel truly. From these premises we shall now proceed to the examination of certain facts connected with the institution of a ministry ; and first with reference to the propagation of truth.

1. It has been asserted by the philosophy of dissent, as was noticed in the last chapter, from the standard work on nonconformity, in extracts to which the reader's attention is particularly recommended, that the truth is of itself a sufficient authority in him who possesses it for the exercise of the ministerial functions. This is an opinion which more properly belongs to the independents than to any other society named or alluded to at the head of this section ; and the consideration of it in this stage of our inquiry may appear somewhat out of place. It will, however, be most convenient to make a few observations upon it as introductory to our present subject, and to return to it when we arrive at that branch of the general argument to which it strictly refers.

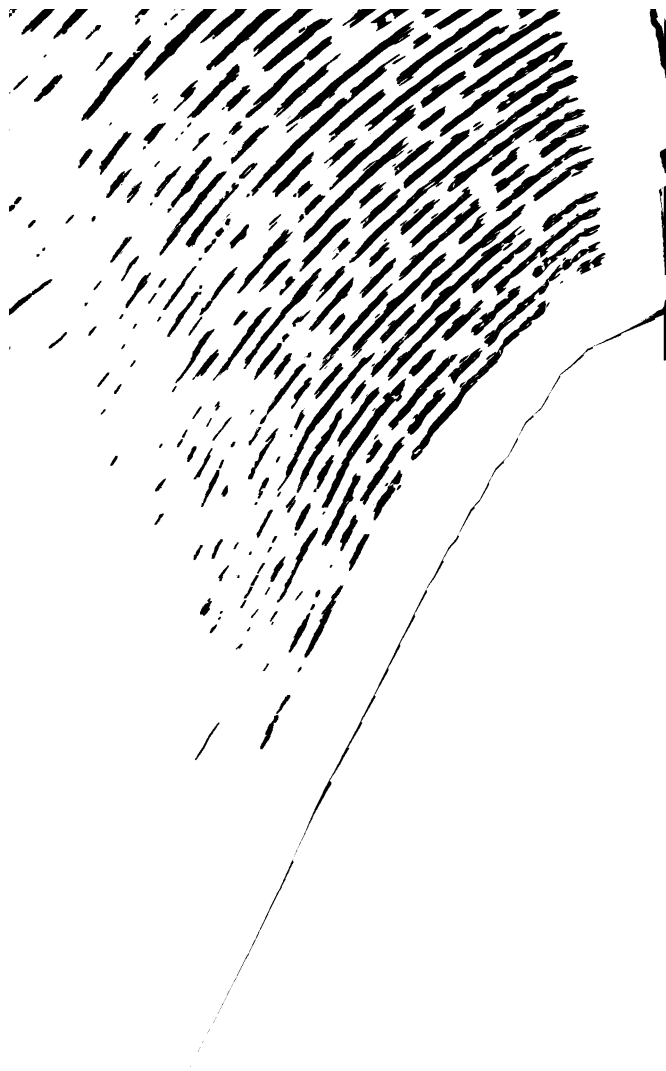
Considered abstractedly from fact, the thesis of Mr. Conder respecting the all-sufficiency of truth as authority to preach, would be unexceptionable, We can conceive a state of doctrinal existence in which this plausible warrant would be absolutely complete ; but it must be with the assistance of

a fertile imagination, by unconsciously creating fictitious circumstances, that it can present to any mind the appearance of validity. The preacher of the truth is intended to spread the knowledge of it among his hearers: the truth is to be received by the people from him. This is the primary object of his ministry. (chap. v.) Now if the idea of truth were strictly defined in its broad outlines and minute details, so that it was perceptible to all who sought it in all its singleness and complexity, and could not fail to be recognized by any to whom it was proposed, and if error were equally easy of apprehension, then indeed reason would certainly pronounce, that the knowledge of the truth might be the preacher's only authority. For it would be a principle, in that case, which could be acted upon; it would also, in all probability, lead to beneficial consequences, and could not by any possibility be productive of evil. If none but those who are authorized by truth would preach, and nothing but truth were propagated; nothing but truth would be received; or should the truth be ever wilfully perverted, the imposture would be instantly detected, because the hearer is, on our hypothesis, gifted with the necessary discernment. But the suppositions made as preparatory to these results are purely visionary. Truth has not been defined so as to be perceptible universally, and incapable of being misconceived. Perhaps no two sects of Christians would agree generally in any definition of truth, beyond its consisting of those doctrines which are agreeable to the word and the will of God. So little is its real nature determined, that one man preaches Calvinism for truth; another

Unitarianism, and a third Popery. And when we descend to realities, we find the dogma that truth alone is a warranty to preach, is extremely defective both as to practice and theory.

That truth alone is the warrant of the preacher, is not sufficient as a rule of practice. The idea of truth being undefined, no conventional exposition of the term in its general and particular signification being received, it is left to every man, as far as this rule extends, to form his own notion of truth. Thus it interposes no bar to the most absurd doctrines in existence, except that it enjoins the duty of discovering an undescribed object. Were all the most discordant teachers of Christianity at present in the world to be informed that truth alone was the authority of a preacher of the gospel, as they all believe they are gospel preachers, they would all take the benefit of the rule. Thus the rule, being indefinite, would admit every species of error which men might imbibe for truth, and thus it is in its concise and unexplained form practically insufficient.

But, secondly, we dispute the theory. It is theoretically false (and we are now only contemplating the reason of the case) that a man is authorized, is warranted to preach, merely if he knows the truth. It is unreasonable to pronounce the mere knowledge of the truth his warrant. He ought at the same time to know, that what he preaches for true, is truth. A man may easily know a truth, without knowing it to be one. I may know certain doctrines, and it may be that the doctrines are true; but I may not know that they are. The preacher ought not



none were to preach but such as enjoyed a true and certain conviction of their competency to teach, there might be only those doctrines taught which constitute that competency; but this would not make the system of instruction complete. The remark of the Roman satirist may be here applied affirmatively in a graver sense than he ever contemplated—

Scire tuum nihil est, nisi te scire hoc sciat alter.

The disciple must know the authority and the ability of his master, in order for the ends of his ministry to be secured. If the learner doubt the talents of his guide, he will be proportionably unwilling to receive his instruction: yet a willingness to receive the words of a teacher is requisite to being taught; and nothing better paves the way for edification than confidence in the instructor, if duly qualified. Apply these general observations to the case between a minister of the gospel and an attendant on his ministration, and we see immediately the rapid and boundless circulation of truth which might be calculated upon, were there no teachers but such as knew their authority to be divine, and did the people but recognise in those ministers such a qualification. There cannot be imagined, according to reason, a perfect scheme of teaching, unless both parties possessed genuine tests of the quality of the instruction: and as the scheme which God has designed—if He has designed any—must be supposed good, we cannot do otherwise than believe, when we consult our reason, that such criterions make part of it.

Now, with this twofold theory the Scripture will be found in perfect accordance: one or two instances

only of the coincidence belong to this place. It is sufficient that the Saviour and his Apostles were well assured of their commission to preach, and of the truth of their message and doctrines, and that the people themselves were furnished by them with the means of verifying their authority.

Of the certainty of Christ as to the truth of his doctrines, no professing Christian doubts. It is not, however, irrelevant to the point in debate, to notice that even Christ himself made the asseveration of this certainty a ground of argument for their reception. "Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak *that we do know*, and testify *that we have seen*." (John iii. 10, 11.) In another place, "I have not spoken of myself, but the Father which sent me: he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak. And I *know* that his commandment is life everlasting." (John xii. 50.) The language of the Apostles is to the same purpose. "This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things, ~~and~~ we *know* that his testimony is true." (John xxi. 24.) He *knoweth* that he saith true, that ye might believe!" (Ibid. xix. 35.) "We *know* that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true." (1 John v. 20.) And no persons could have more satisfactory and certain evidence to themselves of their call to the ministry of the gospel than they, and of the truth of their doctrines. They had not to depend entirely on their feelings for a witness. Though they probably were moved by some strong internal impulse to

preach, this was by no means their sole authority. They might, in that case, have been no better than the foolish prophets that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing, "saying, the Lord saith, and the Lord hath not sent them." (Ezek. xiii. 6.) They were, in fact, called by the audible words of Christ himself, and those words were even confirmed by subsequent operations. Christ said to the twelve Apostles, "As ye go, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And in another place He commanded more explicitly the eleven that survived the traitor, to "go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." These are but two passages out of several, in which it is revealed that the Apostles had not to depend on their feelings for their commission or for their doctrines being conformable to the will of God. They heard the word of Christ; they saw him, conversed with him, and received such sensible assurances as they could no more mistake, than doubt they heard him speaking;—they saw, they heard, and they knew. And if any uncertainty could possibly remain in their minds, it must have been entirely removed soon after, when the promise of the Holy Ghost, who was to bring all things to their remembrance which Christ had spoken to them, and to lead them into all truth, was fulfilled, in a miraculous manner, on the first day of Pentecost, after the ascension; and when, besides, they perceived in themselves, as they had previously done, the power

of interrupting the course of nature, by healing the sick, and raising the dead. Nor was St. Paul less certified of his mission and his inspiration than the other Apostles. He was converted by a miracle from heaven. His senses were the medium of his conviction, and his direction to Damascus, and the fulfilment of his vision, and the information he received, made complete a case of circumstantial evidence. (Acts ix.) Thus the Apostles, believing in Christ, on the most certain grounds, enjoyed the most unequivocal proofs of their mission and their truth.

If we inquire, in the next place, what was the assurance of these matters which they afforded to the people, we shall soon discover that they did not demand to be believed merely on their own affirmation; though, of course, they might have made the most positive assertions possible of their call and authority. God did not ordain it thus. He did not require men to believe the Apostles solely on their word: nor do we think it could have been reasonable to suppose, that God would have dealt in this manner with the people. Because, if we are to believe that men are sent by God to preach on their assertion of it as a fact, then a man has only to maintain that he is divinely inspired and commissioned, and we are not at liberty to disbelieve him, whatever may be his doctrines. It is not decreed by God that we should receive a preacher without good credentials. The Apostles had several certificates of their credibility to present to their hearers. They had the arguments from the Scriptures of the Jews;—they had an appeal to recent occurrences;—they had

the excellence of their doctrines, the integrity and devotion of their lives;—above all, in connexion with these, the testimony of miracles that God was in them and with them, and that the word which they delivered was divine. And that they had the power of working miracles conferred upon them, and for the purpose of evidence to the people, is certain. As to the gift itself, Christ, we read, (Matthew x. 1,) “gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease; and bade them heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils.” And we read frequently, (as in Acts v. 12,) that “by the hands of the Apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people, insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that, at the least, the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. There came also a multitude out of the cities round about Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits, and they were healed every one.” But what were the purposes of this gift of miracles? One of them was, that the people might be convinced, by means of it, of the truth of their doctrines. In proof of this, we read in St. Mark's gospel, at the end, that the Apostles “went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following.” Also (Acts xiv. 3), Paul and Barnabas abode long time at Iconium, “speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.” And again, (Heb. ii. 4,) “The word of sal-

vation was first spoken by Christ, and was afterwards confirmed by them that heard Christ, God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will." From these passages, it is evident that the Apostles wrought miracles, as one means of proving to the people that they were commissioned to preach by divine authority. And not only the Apostles, but even Christ himself did not claim belief for his bare assertions. Though he was the subject of prophecy, very capable of interpretation after its fulfilment; though he was variously foreshown to the Jews, and, last of all, forerun by John the Baptist, yet He did not appear before the people, and demand for his unsupported word implicit confidence. He wrought miracles, as the Apostles did, to procure credit to his doctrines. When John sent disciples to him, to inquire whether he were the one that was to come, he did not answer, "I know that I am called, and sent by God," but, "Go and tell John what things ye have seen and heard: how the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached." (Luke vii. 22.) He grounded the duty of the people's believing his pretences on his wondrous works. Again, in a long disputation with the Jews, he says, "But I have greater witness than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me." The same Evangelist records, that on another occasion Jesus answered the same infatuated people, "I told you, and ye believed not; the

works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." (John x. 25.) And not provoked by their obstinate infidelity and personal violence to abandon them to their hardness of heart, but continuing his discourse with the tenderest solicitude for their conversion, he added, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in Him." (John x. 37, 38.)

Further extracts from Scripture would be superfluous to establish the facts, that the Apostles enjoyed, through the medium of their senses, the most indisputable evidence of their inspiration and authority; and that Christ himself, as well as they, performed works of a miraculous nature, for the express purpose of inducing the belief of their doctrines in their hearers: thus reason and Scripture deny that the knowledge of the truth is a warrant to preach. (See pp. 73—75.)

Now, bearing constantly in mind the scriptural precedents which we have just examined, it is for us to inquire into the credibility of those pretenders to inspiration, who, with a very moderate degree of learning, or without even the knowledge of letters, offer themselves to the people as chosen vessels to bear the name of Christ, on the ground that the Apostles were poor unlearned men, and that, like them, they obtain their knowledge of the gospel, their power, and their call to preach it, by direct and immediate instruction from heaven,—not through the teaching of man, but only by infusion of the Spirit.

It is well known, that the ministers of the church

do not lay claim to this exclusive preparation of the Spirit. We also deny that the Apostles were taught solely by the Holy Ghost, without any instruction from preaching, or from any human teacher. The Scriptures supply no positive evidence of the Apostles, or of any of their compeers, being taught to preach the word of God by immediate inspiration. They were assured that they should be directly inspired, to answer the temporal authorities before whom they should be arraigned; and some of them were enabled, in such a supernatural manner, to perpetuate the word of God in written records: but, farther than this, clear proof is wanting of their receiving the truth otherwise than by the examination of the Old Testament, their teachers, and particularly our Saviour's oral instruction; that disposition to imbibe true doctrine, and that application of it to the mind and the heart, which is the ordinary office of the third person in the Godhead. It is, however, probable that it was given them what they were to speak, on occasions when they had not received instructions in other ways;—and we shall assume the fact. Still they were, to a certainty, not taught entirely by immediate illapses. On the contrary, their education for the ministry was, in great measure at least, received by the easy course of attending to *His* verbal instructions, who, before his ascension, commissioned them to teach all nations to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them. (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.) It is, besides, untrue that all the Apostles were illiterate men: St. Paul and St. Luke possessed, particularly the former, very considerable learning for the times in which they lived.

All of them probably knew Greek, and had known the Jewish Scriptures, which were able to make them "wise unto salvation;" and all of them, who were not learned, had enjoyed the advantages of Christ's preaching and conversation. These facts are alone sufficient to show, that they make false pretensions who compare themselves to the Apostles: if they are ignorant of the alphabet, and claim to have been taught only by the Spirit, they pretend indeed to being more wonderfully taught than the Apostles themselves. And the very pretence of being taught like the Apostles, is at best an illusion: it is impossible they can have been so taught. But, passing by this unintended assumption of superiority over these distinguished persons, we will imagine, for the sake of argument, that the Apostles were ignorant mechanics, or labourers of an inferior class, and that they received their knowledge of the gospel solely by an effusion of light from heaven. Are these men, according to Scripture, to be believed in their assertion, that they are called and sent to preach the gospel as the Apostles were? Their argument, which we are now to consider, that they are inspired to preach in the same manner as the poor and ignorant fishermen of Galilee, is simply this:—because the Apostles were such men, and were so inspired, they affect to be like, in this respect, to these first missionaries of our religion. The question is, are they to be believed? Is it not possible that they may be as the false prophets of old, who followed their own spirits, and said, "The Lord saith, when the Lord hath not sent them." (Ezek. xiii. 6.) Are their inspiration and their vocation facts so certain to themselves and others,

that it is impossible to be a self-deception, and that it is incumbent on the people to concur in their opinion? We will here take up the favourite, but misunderstood and abused argument of the dissenters. We must have every conformity to the Scriptures. These men claim a commission and an inspiration, similar to those of the Apostles. Then they must, according to Scripture, have as certain proofs of their not being self-deceived, and of their appointment to the ministry, as the Apostles had. They must have had some delegation of authority from Christ by word of mouth; and they must be able to perform miracles, both as evidences to themselves and to the people. Have they any such proof to themselves and to others? Certainly not. Then, according to Scripture, they are not to be believed. They take upon themselves more than apostolic claims, by assuming authority to preach without a sensible commission, and by requiring us to believe their word without miraculous attestations.

But very possibly there may be enthusiasts nothing loth to imagine themselves taught in a more direct manner from above, than the most constant companions of the Saviour. Perhaps they see no impropriety in supposing they are exalted, in this respect, above the first human teachers; they may conceive they are instructed differently from them, and therefore need not their credentials. But there is one degree of impiety which few men probably will dare to transcend—to vindicate to themselves as perfect inspiration as that possessed by Christ himself; and exalt themselves above the Saviour, and arrogate more than his authority. Yet this would be the

case, did such men as affect immediate inspiration from heaven, demand credit, on scriptural precedent, without the most convincing testimony to their truth by supernatural agency. Even the Son of God himself, whom we are commanded to honour even as we honour the Father, He did not come before the people, and require to be believed without working miracles, in condescension to human infirmities and to rational principles. But those who pretend to immediate inspiration in these days, and give us no proof of their truth, except that such inspiration was afforded to man in the apostolic times, and then expect us to believe that they are so inspired,—aspire to higher authority than was exercised by Christ. They are setting themselves up above Him. Christ did not require men to believe Him merely on his word. These preachers, according to the argument from precedent, do. They exact greater faith in themselves, than Christ demanded for his own words. What wickedness must those persons be guilty of, in thus preferring a stronger claim to confidence than the Son of God; and what must be our folly and our crime, if we confer upon them, by admitting it, a superior degree of honour!

We have seen then, according to Scripture and to reason, that it is not to be believed, from the precedents alleged, that these men are called and instructed only by the Spirit: because they are unlike, very essentially unlike, to persons, mentioned in Scripture, who were so called and instructed; and are, at the same time, destitute of those circumstances of credibility of which reason warrants the expectation. According to Scripture and reason,

they ought to possess, and to be able to afford, certain proofs of their ordination. They have not these convictions, nor these testimonials. They cannot, either scripturally or reasonably, be believed in their assertion of inspiration, without these evidences. These evidences they neither possess, nor have the power of giving. There is an end, then, to all sound pretensions of comparison; and to believe there is a similitude of authority, is a faith not agreeable to Scripture, which is our rule. And the claimants of equal inspiration, on the ground of precedent, are, in fact, guilty of the wickedness of arrogating higher authority than the Apostles, or even Christ himself.

Others will depend much on their feelings, as an indication of their call; but these are evidently inconclusive, and opposed to Scripture and to reason, as a sufficient evidence of the fact, equally with the ground which we have just been examining.

But, *secondly*, to commence another step in our argument, the claimants of immediate inspiration and internal calls, exclusively of all other modes of instruction, do not rest all their credibility on mere alleged apostolic precedent: they extract from Scripture more special arguments. And the discussion of one of them, to which we next proceed, will necessarily occupy a large portion of our pages. It is that derived from Acts ii, 17, 18, which we noticed in the beginning of chapter the seventh, and which is maintained, not only by the illiterate among the methodists, but the more erudite followers of Fox. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; and

on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy."

The first prevailing opinion, among certain of our opponents, with respect to this passage, is, that the days mentioned in it are our own. Men might certainly *doubt*, if they considered whether the times in which we live were, in the popular sense, the last days of the world; whether we are bordering on the end of time. And if these were the last days, agreeably to the true purport of St. Peter's words, we might also inquire, with some suspicion, whether much of the preaching with which this country is pervaded were such as is intended by the extract before us. To multitudes, however, the idea of these being the last days, is the most obvious. They are no less certain, that the preaching of such as "know not letters, having never learned," is the prophesying foretold. Is it not, say they, as plainly written as possible, that, in the last days, God would pour out of his Spirit on all flesh, and that our sons and our daughters were to preach? Are not these the last days? Are there not many of both sexes, in all directions, destitute of all human learning, proclaiming, by their ministerial labours, the vanity of education? Are not these persons, beyond all question, taught only by the Spirit of God? And do we not here behold the prophecy fulfilled? The prophecy thus understood is indeed most probably the cause of its own fulfilment,—if for a moment we dare imagine the eloquence of the illiterate to be its completion. Those who believe that in these days men and women were to be moved, and taught

to preach by the immediate influence of the Spirit, and that nothing whatever is requisite but this inspiration, may expect the blessing to be conferred upon themselves. And if they once feel a desire to be the messengers of salvation, they may assume it instantly to be that identical gift: they are under the operation, not of their own spirit, but of God's; and their prophesying is commenced.

The better informed of those who contend for a continuation of the prophesying of the apostolic age to our own days, argue, that the period signified in the passage of St. Peter's oration, is the entire period of the christian dispensation. There is some apparent foundation for this opinion in two or three portions of the prophetic writings. "The last days" may signify in Isaiah ii. 2, and Micah iv. 1, various times from the commencement to the termination of the Christian era. The matter for our determination is the interpretation of the expression in the verses under review: towards which it will be advisable to make a few preparatory observations.

In almost all countries visited by the traveller, he beholds the wandering or the sojourning Israëlite. On the face of all the earth, where is there a nation to compare with the Jews? In nearly every land are they settlers,—in nearly every land but (with almost one exception in particular) their own; from that they are banished well nigh altogether. The whole commonwealth, as it were, are outcasts from Zion. And needless must it be to inform the christian reader, that this banishment from their home; from that land which they love, and to which they would fain return, but which—such is God's decreed—

they cannot yet regain, is, in part, a judgment of the Almighty upon them for crucifying the Lord of life. But this is far from all the punishment which fell upon that devoted nation, for that deed of horror. The most signal vengeance which God inflicted was displayed in one of the most stupendous incidents in the history of mankind—the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants. Their cry had been, “His blood be on us, and on our children.” And it was upon them. It chills our veins to read the narrative of its protracted siege. God had commanded the sword and the famine to do their work to the full. Perhaps more than half the nation expired in the agonies of war. The lives of thirteen hundred thousand human victims, and some of them sacrificed in the most appalling horrors, were a small retribution for the blood of the incarnate Son of God. But also, what deserves particularly to be noted, their city became an heap, and their magnificent temple was laid in ruins, razed even with the ground. So bent on destruction were the Roman soldiery, that its very foundation was not suffered to go undisturbed, and the plough-share was driven where it had reposed. And with the structure departed all its glories and its treasures. The priesthood and sacrifices came to an end. The one great sacrifice had been offered; an overruling destiny deprived the people of the mockery of its prefiguration. The holy of holies, and the ark of the covenant, vanished from their sight. The beauty of the land was gone. A period was put to the national polity. The once favoured people of the Lord became his abhorred inheritance, and the per-

secutors of the Christians were humbled even to the dust.

It might be imagined, that an event of such awful import to the Jewish nation, and that a deliverance of the believers in Christ from its oppressions, would make a conspicuous figure in the records of our religion. Recollecting the relation which the religion of the Jews bore to the Christian; how one was to give place to the other, and how that other was established by a Jew in his human nature, amongst the Jews themselves; recollecting too that it was a visitation for denying their promised king; it can hardly be supposed that the subversion of the ancient religion would not occupy a prominent place in the sacred annals.

And this is the real state of the case. Not only is the destruction of Jerusalem predicted by their prophets of old, but in three of the gospels it is written that Christ foretold it with much pomp of imagery, and with many circumstantial directions and promises to his followers. The twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel, the thirteenth of St. Mark's, and the twenty-first of St. Luke's, are almost all filled with a description of this awful event, and instructions to the Christians for their conduct at that particular crisis. In St. Luke's gospel, who writes more circumstantially than the rest, it is related—"As some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, As for these things which ye behold, the days will come in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down. And they asked him, Master, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming?" He tells

them first of all, "there would be many come in his name, saying, I am Christ; many false Christs; and that nation would rise up against nation, and that there would be pestilences in divers places; and when ye shall see (added He) Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it, depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. There shall be two in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. But woe to them that are with child; and to them that give suck in those days. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light; and then shall ye see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh. And this generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled."

It is to be particularly observed in examining this passage, that the disciples and our blessed Lord himself, both concur in calling the event signified *his coming*. "When shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of *thy coming*? The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light; and then shall ye see *the Son of man coming* in a cloud, with power and great glory." It is probable that this solemn declaration of the Saviour,

bears a double construction; that a remote allusion is intended to the consummation of all things, and the judgment of the world. But that in its primary signification it referred to the desolation of the Jewish metropolis, is indisputable. That he introduces the obscuration of the sun and moon in reference to the subject, is no objection to this view of the matter; on the contrary, it is rather its confirmation. It is well known, that in the language of prophecy those darkened luminaries signify "distress of nations, with perplexity." I need refer the reader only to Isaiah xiii. 1—11, on the destruction of Babylon; and to Ezekiel xxxii. 1—10, concerning the fall of Egypt. Neither does it weaken our argument in the least, but constitutes much of its weight, that the Lord has announced as "*his coming*" the event contemplated. The conversation with the disciples took place about the year 33 of the Christian era. In the year 70, or thirty-seven years afterwards, history informs us that destruction befel Jerusalem. And that it was one of the designs of Christ to come, in some sense, after the utterance of the prophecy, and before many years elapsed, is very evident from his words recorded in another place. In the latter end of the last chapter of St. John's gospel, our Saviour, we read, told St. Peter what death he should die. Peter then inquired of Christ, "What shall this man do? (meaning John). Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die; yet Jesus said not unto him, he shall not die: but, if I will that he tarry till I come, what is

that to thee?" Now St. Peter died before the destruction of Jerusalem. St. John survived it. John lived to about the age of one hundred years. In that time we may then believe that Christ did come. Nor can this be supposed to signify the fulfilment of the promise of the Holy Ghost, under the expression. "I will come to you;" for it seems evidently intended that the coming was one which St. Peter did not live to see, though St. John was to behold it. Now the descent of the Holy Ghost could not be that event, for St. Peter was one of its principal witnesses. To this it should be added, that in Luke xx. 16, the idea of the divine punishment of the Jews is described by *coming* and *destroying* the husbandmen, which visitation is, in Matt. xxii. 7, dimly figured by sending forth his armies, destroying those murderers, and burning up their city. Besides which we may adduce, (Luke xviii. 8,) "I tell you he will avenge them speedily: Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" These words could hardly refer at all to the coming to the judgment, because, according to the general tenor of Scripture, it is to be expected, rather than not, that at that period the faithful will abound; and the then idea of the speediness of his advent ill accords with the end of this world. They were spoken with a special reference to the destruction of the Jews, described in the latter part of the preceding chapter. If for the words "the earth," "the land" were substituted, and the whole sentiment be applied to the subversion of the Jewish state, the context will be more consistent, and the sense will be less liable to objection, and

will be more suitable to the infidel condition of the nation. It deserves also to be noted that this coming is associated with the ideas of avenging the elect, and at no distant period,—intimations highly applicable to the approaching fate of Jerusalem. But that which alone evinces, and much more in connexion with the foregoing arguments, the truth of our interpretation, is the fact that our Saviour directed his discourse in Matt. xxiv. in immediate answer to the question, when the goodly structure of the temple would be demolished. The disciples too appear to have considered, when shall these things be, and Christ's coming, to be in fact and in time the same. (v. 3.) And as our Saviour sanctioned their idea of his coming, it appears a fair inference that it was an advent to the Jews for the destruction of their once exalted city. Besides this, he told them that there would not be left one stone upon another, that Jerusalem would be surrounded by armies; and with no very obscure intimation of the nation to which they belonged; adding other minute particulars, and concluding with the assertion, that that generation should see the events which he predicted brought to pass. And in truth, before that generation had been gathered to their fathers, the city was beleaguered by the imperial host, the industrious vengeance of the Roman soldiery dug up the foundation stones of the temple, in partial and unintended fulfilment of his word; and in several other of its details, the misery of the Jews bore close resemblance to the calamities of the prophetic picture.

On the whole then we conclude, from what we

have at present seen, that our Saviour in the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel alluded to the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened in the year 70. And the solemnity of the passage, both for its length and grandeur, strongly indicates, together with the well known circumstances of the Jewish nation at the time it was spoken, the importance of its destruction in the sight of God, and in the mind of Christ.

It will be next our design to show, that the "last days" signified in Acts ii. 17, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy," were the last days of Jerusalem, the time just previous, if not subsequent to its fall. And whatever differences of opinion exist on this point, I at least am supported in my belief by one of the ablest interpreters of those oracles of God that were committed to the Jews, (See Note K,) and by other commentators on the New Testament of the most respectable authority.

That the expression, "the last days" was applied to the final period of the Jewish policy, is not antecedently improbable by any of its circumstances. Neither will any difficulty exist on the part of the literary dissenter, in assenting to our opinion, that the "last days" *may* not be the days in which we live, but a passage of time in a former and distant century. There are those, however, who would be disposed to meet immediately by ridicule any assertion of "the last days" being long since past. It will be necessary, in order to silence their objections, to go through what would otherwise be a superfluous process.

These readers, then, who believe that the last days signified must be the days in which we live, will do well to consider the occasion on which the words were spoken, and other circumstances. They formed part of an oration delivered by St. Peter on the day of Pentecost, the first that followed the crucifixion, that is, in or about the year 34. The Christians were assembled together on that day at Jerusalem, to the number probably of one hundred and twenty, all the believers there at the time; and, according to Christ's promise of the Spirit, "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (See Acts ii.) And there were residing at Jerusalem, Jews, who had travelled thither from many foreign lands. These men were astonished to hear the Christians, who were all natives of one country, able to speak on a sudden their languages. These foreigners, we read, "were all amazed and were in doubt, saying one to another, what meaneth this? Others mocking, said, these men are full of new wine. But Peter, upon their thus expressing their opinions, stood up and said, "Hearken unto my words: these men are not drunken as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day; but this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.'" It may be noticed here, that though the passage is professedly taken by St. Peter from the book of Joel, the words "the last days" do not occur in the place referred to of the prophecy. (See Joel ii. 28.) The corre-

sponding word is "afterward," the original bearing a signification at least consistent, if not identical, with that affixed on it by St. Peter. There is an apparent, but not a real disagreement between the original and the quotation. It is, however, with the words of St. Peter only that we are now concerned. And he has declared most explicitly, that the gift of tongues on the day of Pentecost, distinguished by the effusion of the Holy Spirit, was intended by Joel, when he foretold that at some future time during the Christian dispensation, God would pour out his Spirit on all flesh; that is, in the judgment of many, on both Jew and Gentile—or, according to the opinion of others, on the young and old, male and female among the Jews, without distinction. Thus then it is quite certain, that the last days signified by St. Peter, were at least begun at the time he spoke. This outpouring of the Spirit was to happen in the last days, and it happened *then*; therefore the last days were at that time. If the last days intended did not end at that time, at all events they were begun: they were then at least in part, that is upwards of one thousand eight hundred years ago.

Hence there is not that absurdity which some have imagined, in supposing that the last days, as intended by St. Peter, were not these times, but several centuries previous. One of those last days, according to St. Peter, has been past eighteen hundred years. We have not ascertained that they all transpired in that remote age; but, as far as we have examined at present, it appears probable that those persons who have never doubted that the last days intended are these in which we live, have made an

error of nearly two thousand years in their calculation; for we have discovered one of the last days, to have belonged to that ancient period, and that, the last days were rather a portion of antiquity than of recent or present times.

But, according to this statement, there is, some argument, advanced already for the belief, that, the last days signified were the last days of Jerusalem. The last days signified were in existence at the time St. Peter made that defence of the Christians, from whence the words are taken; and as certainly they were spoken in the last days of Jerusalem, for the city stood only about thirty-seven years after the occasion of St. Peter's speech. The last days signified might not be the last days of Jerusalem, in consequence of the foregoing conclusions; but, thus much is certain—the last days signified, and the last days of Jerusalem, were in part co-existent. And, when it is considered, that the last days of Jerusalem must have been a remarkable epoch in the early annals of Christianity, there seems a probability of their being synonymous, or different expressions of the same signification. As Christ laid so much emphasis on his coming to destroy Jerusalem; as it was so awful and vast a judgment of God, as the men whom God enabled to write the Scriptures, were converted Jews, and deeply concerned in this destruction; as they to whom those Scriptures were addressed, were either converted Jews, or Christians dwelling among Jews who were their persecutors, as the Scriptures, except the revelation of St. John, were written, and the people were living just before the very time of the destruction,—is it not to be

expected that much reference would be made by inspiration to so important and interesting an event? Would it not be wonderful if there had not been any? And would it not be very fit and proper for the inspired writers to call the end of the Jewish religion, "last days?" Another reason which strengthens the argument is this: that since the last days contemplated by St. Peter could not possibly mean the last days immediately prior to the end of the world; we must either imagine they were the Christian era in general, or the period to which we assign them.

"And the usage of the expression "the last days," or of similar ones, in the New Testament, authorizes the preference of the latter interpretation. If we examine the remaining passages in the New Testament, in which the idea of last days is conveyed, we shall discover that it is much more probable that the last days of Jerusalem were signified than the era of the Christian religion. To these passages we now turn; all of which we will examine in succession:

"The first which I select is 1 John ii. 18. "Little children," says he, "it is the last time; and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know it is the last time." To understand this passage, it is necessary to recollect some of the words of Christ, according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, in his prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem. The disciples asked him (in or about the year 38), "when the destruction of the temple was to be, and what were the signs of his coming." - In giving them the tokens of destruc-

tion, he said, "Many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo! here is Christ, or lo! he is there, believe him not; for there shall arise false Christs and false prophets." These false Christs were evidently to come before the destruction of Jerusalem, and in her last days; for Christ uttered the prophecy only thirty-seven years before the ancient city was overthrown.

Now what writes St. John in our extract from his Epistle, which was composed several years after the delivery of the prophecy, but before its fulfilment? "It is the last time"—or the last hour. The last time was when he was writing; and he says, he knows it is the last time, because there were many antichrists come, alluding at the same moment to their having been foretold. The prophecy here alluded to, and the appearance of the antichrists, so exactly correspond with the passages in Matt. xxiv., that it is almost impossible for the reference to our Saviour's prediction to escape unnoticed. Christ did foretel that false prophets and false Christs should come, and come before the fall of Jerusalem. This was one of the signs of his last hour. Nor is it to be doubted, that the last days of that ill-fated city must be the last time intended by St. John. What last time could it mean if it were not that? It certainly was not the end of the world, because it was a time passing when St. John wrote. "It is," said he, "the last time." And we know *that* time was not the last days of the world, for of the six thousand years from the creation, nearly two have elapsed since. Nor could the Apostle mean the *whole*

duration of Christianity on the earth, for when he wrote, he speaks of the time being present. Neither is it at all probable that he intended to inform the converts to whom his words are addressed, that the Christian dispensation was come; for that they must have known as well as himself. Besides, the reason he assigned for knowing that it was the last time, sufficiently shows that he did not intend the commencement of the Christian era, the new religion being the last system of the divine economy. Had that been his meaning, he must in propriety have said, that *Christ* is come, and hereby we know the final dispensation is commenced. But the reason given is, that antichrists are come, and hereby we know it is the last time; and the coming of antichrists was one of the signs of the downfall of the Jewish state; and considering only the circumstances of its destruction, it cannot be reasonably doubted that the Apostle contemplated any other time but of that approaching catastrophe.

Our conclusion is strengthened by its correspondence with 2 Thess. ii. 2, 3, 8. This is one passage out of several, where we observe that the Christians expected that Christ was soon to come. St. Paul assures them that the day of Christ was *not* at hand; that the man of sin should come first. This appears, in part at least, to agree with antichrist or false Christs having to come before the destruction of Jerusalem.

The principal objections to this interpretation are, that St. Paul in his first Epistle, to which probably the second refers, had written of the coming to judgment, and in this denies that the day he indi-

cated was at hand. To these arguments it may be answered, that though St. Paul had introduced the subject of the judgment of the world in 1 Thess. iv., yet that he appears to have digressed in the beginning of chap. v. to other matter: "But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you;" and he proceeds in language well adapted to the prediction of Jewish desolation. Add to which, the expression "times and seasons" occurs only twice, I believe, in the New Testament, and in the other place (Acts i. 7,) it is employed with special reference to a circumstance connected with Israel as a kingdom. With regard to the imminence of the event, it appears that the day intended in chap. v. must be one that was not far distant, as it would overtake *them*, but not probably as a thief. This intimation seems to have alarmed the Thessalonians to such a degree, that St. Paul found it necessary, in his second Epistle, to calm their apprehensions, lest, as it may be imagined, their hourly or daily expectation of some dreadful visitation, perhaps the last judgment, might incapacitate them for all moral or corporeal exertion; and he assures them, "that the day is *not* at hand; that the man of sin must come first." And it is a very well ascertained fact, that the subversion of the Jews did not take place till about eighteen years after the writing of this Epistle—an interval which might reasonably authorize the negation of its instantaneous occurrence. St. Paul appears to have connected the calamities of the Jewish nation and the circumstances of the day of judgment, after the example of Jesus Christ in Matt. xxiv., and a further completion may be probably intended than is here specified.

The second passage I adduct is, James v. 1, 2, 3, This Apostle was writing of certain rich men, who had hoarded money, and withheld the wages of their labourers. "Go to now," says he, "weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days." It is of course absurd to suppose, that these men had accumulated property for the day of judgment, or for the days immediately preceding it; it is equally impossible to imagine, that they designed their hoards either for enjoyment in the remotest ages of the world, or during the whole continuance of Christendom. The passage, "Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days," viewed in connexion with the context, conveys not only the idea of rebuke for the act of accumulation, but also implies some fatality in the period on which the misers had fallen. But if it be understood that the era of Christianity were intended, insuperable difficulties present themselves to the conception that the circumstance of time occasioned any peculiar peril. Neither can we perceive the propriety of altering the reading of the passage into "ye have heaped treasure together in the last days;" if by "the last days" were signified the Christian era, this would be to give a redundancy to that part of the sentence which expresses the time, and indeed it would seem to the whole period. But if we understand that the last days in the intention of the Apostle, were the last days, of Jerusalem, then, whether we read *in* or *for* the last days, the expression is capable of a very rational and intelligible construction. It is very obvious to understand, that they had amassed wealth which would be destroyed

in the ~~expiring~~ greatness of the Jewish state—more particularly, as in the 7th, 8th, and 9th verses of the chapter from which we have made our extract, the Apostle uses language which strictly accords with the description of the destruction of the city. The Christians were to be patient under the afflictions brought upon them by these rich men: and it was one motive for patience, that the Lord was coming, and at no distant period. To complete our view of this passage, it is necessary to add, that the Epistle was written probably in the year 61.

The Epistles of St. Peter next claim our attention. It appears to be generally agreed among the learned, that the second Epistle of St. Peter was written to the same persons as the first, and very shortly afterwards. There are also in the Epistle evident traces of the persons addressed being in a state of persecution and affliction. And the fact is certain, that in the two Epistles the allusion to the end of one period or more occurs in three different places. And the terms employed, examined by themselves, appear justly applicable to the circumstances of Jerusalem. In one of them (1 Pet. i. 20), it is written that Christ was manifest in (as it ought to have been translated) the last times: that Christ was manifested when Jerusalem was verging to ruin, is an unquestionable fact. In another of the three passages, the reference to the tottering condition of Jerusalem is marked with striking distinctness. The Apostle's words are (2 Pet. iii. 1, &c.): "This second Epistle, beloved, I now write unto you, in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by

the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the Apostles of the Lord and Saviour. Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days, scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming?" It is well known that the destruction of the Jewish state is described in Scripture as an advent of Christ, and that the idea of his coming quickly was very common at that time among Christians, and, as it appears, in perfect consistency with truth; also, that before that appearance of Christ iniquity would abound, and the love of many would wax cold. In these particulars the language of the Apostle bears a strong resemblance to the state of the Jewish nation. He intimates that in those last days of which he speaks Christ is to come. The scoffers would deride the idea of his coming, by holding up to contempt an unperformed promise of his appearance. This shows that the faithful entertained an expectation that he was to come, and that he was to come at no great distance of time; otherwise there could have been no pretext for immediate ridicule. This well accords with the date of the destruction of Jerusalem. It actually happened not more than about seven years after the Epistle was written. The rise of scoffers previously to that event is another feature in its history. Besides which, by a reference to the 16th and 19th verses of the first chapter in this Epistle, as illustrated by the ingenious argument in Bishop Sherlock's Discourse on the Use and Intent of Prophecy, it will appear that the Apostle intended to recall to the attention of his disciples that power and coming of the Lord Jesus, of which his own prophe-

tical promise was the surest ground of expectation, and which could probably be no other than his visitation on the unworthy descendants of the holy Abraham. There is also another remarkable circumstance, which deserves observation in connexion with this passage. Allusion is made in the 2nd verse to the holy Prophets, and to us the Apostles. It is recorded by one of the earlier fathers of the church, that St. Paul and St. Peter proclaimed at Rome, and as we may infer in other places, the downfall of Jerusalem. (Lactant. iv. 21, de V. Sap.) How awfully the page of prophecy had rung the knell of her glory in the ears of the people, is known to every one conversant with the Jewish Scriptures.

If we turn to the remaining passage (1 Pet. i. 5), we have also language that is applicable to the case of Jerusalem. We read there of salvation ready to be revealed. The being "saved" sometimes means in Scripture, a preservation from temporal suffering; and once St. Peter himself uses this word in that sense. It is an acknowledged fact that the Christians were generally persecuted by the Jews, and that our Saviour had prefigured the subversion of the Jewish polity as their deliverance. Also the readiness for revelation may convey the idea of proximity.

But first, in opposition to some such arguments as these, it has been maintained with considerable learning, that the salvation to be revealed in the last days, and the then future coming of Christ; can refer only to his coming to the judgment of the world. Passages in the Epistles, in close connexion with those which we have examined, appear evidently to be so appro-

priate to the destruction of the world and the judgment of mankind, that it is considered impossible that they should have reference to any other events.

The fallacy of this opinion has been long since exhibited. The learned advocates of our own hypothesis have, by an equal display of erudition, demonstrated the suitableness of the terms employed to the conflagration of Zion and the slaughter of her children. But there is another argument in favour of the supposition, that the period intended by the Apostle referred to the fall of Jerusalem, rather than the day of judgment, which its opponents appear to have overlooked. One of the first conclusions which it appears reasonable to draw, on examining the passages in question attentively, is, that the times alluded to coincided with those in which the writer lived. In one of them (1 Pet. i. 20), they are actually so described. "Christ was manifest in the last times." The manifestation of Christ is well known to have occurred in the lifetime of St. Peter. In the second of the passages cited, (see 2 Pet. iii. 1—3,) there are several indications that the Apostle speaks of a contemporary period. One very cogent reason for believing that the Apostle signified the days of his disciples, arises from the consideration, that it is hardly possible to imagine that he could have had any occasion to impress upon them the remembrance of the prediction of the scoffers, and to give admonitions concerning them, if they were not to be expected in their time. The words bear all the external appearance, in their most natural and obvious signification, of warning the Christians of Pontus against the seductions of impious heretics, whom they were in danger

of encountering. And this appearance is converted into certainty by the connexion of the passage with what precedes and follows it. The whole of the second chapter is occupied with an account of false teachers. And there were besides persons that were to arise among them, and were by feigned words to make merchandise of them. (v. 1, 3.) And towards the conclusion of chapter 3rd, as soon as the tide of his eloquence had subsided, he adds, "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness." The Apostle in short informs his disciples that false teachers will spring up among them, and then reminds them that in the last days such persons *were* to come, and finally cautions them against their impostures. Thus far then it appears, that in two of the passages, the times in which the events signified occurred were those of the writer or his disciples. In the remaining passage the internal evidence of the time is much less satisfactory. The only discoverable trace of its coincidence with the date of the Epistle, lies in the expression of readiness, as previously noted. Another argument to the same purpose arises from the unity of the two Epistles. It is reasonable to suppose that the three similar forms of expression of time should bear in them both the same signification.

On the whole, the events in contemplation, which in the language of the Apostle happened in the last days and last time, appear to have taken place in his own age, and on the eve of Jerusalem's desolation. The arguments of those who contend exclusively for reference to the final judgment, are

sufficiently answered by such expositions as have shown the applicability of the terms employed to another circumstance. But it appears not improbable that the exclusion of either sense of the passages is erroneous. That, with this exception, the opponent parties are both right and both wrong. That as our Saviour, in his prophetic denunciations of judgment on Jerusalem, combined a second allusion to the day of everlasting retribution, so St. Peter also, guided by his Spirit, may have involved the matter in the same mystery.

That the immediate contents of the words expressive of a final period, in our three last cited passages, point in part to time in progress when they were written, and to the fall of Jerusalem, there can be little reasonable doubt; and if the times referred to could belong only to one of the two events to which they are applied, it is more probable that it must be the temporal visitation. For in one of the three instances where it is written, "in the last days Christ was manifested," the expression cannot by any force of distortion be adapted to the day of judgment. In the other two cases, the fall of Jerusalem evidently appears to be literally alluded to, and the idea of the judgment seems to be at the most only implied by analogy. One objection of Whitby to our interpretation admits of a short answer. He contends that the words "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day," would not have been written by the inspired penman, had he signified that the judgments which he proclaimed were near. That learned and excellent commentator appears to have forgotten at the moment, that it is

very probable, agreeably to former precedents among prophets, that St. Peter did not know the precise time of the visitation, and that the language was ordained to be mysterious, and to have a double application.

So much for the objections to our interpretation drawn from the consideration of the day of judgment. But though it were admitted that "the last days," and phrases of that import in the Epistles of St. Peter, are to be understood of the period of Jerusalem's greatness, even in preference to the final judgment, yet it may be supposed that those expressions are capable of being applied to the Christian era, and still bear a construction perfectly consistent with the date which we have assigned to the several occurrences to which the times refer; inasmuch as whatever happened in the years immediately preceding the destruction of Jerusalem, most unquestionably occurred during the Christian dispensation. But, in opposition to this opinion, it is to be observed, that there are in one of the three passages, and the context from the Epistles of St. Peter, just quoted, evident allusions to predicted appearances about to present themselves not long before a coming of Christ which was soon to happen; that the predictions were prophecies which had already been delivered at the time of St. Peter's writing; and that such predictions of forthcoming events, previous to a speedy advent of Christ, are recorded in Scripture very evidently applicable to the period prior to the fall of Jerusalem, but bearing much less perceptible reference to the duration of the Christian dispensation in general, and still less to the state of the church to be

expected immediately before the coming to judgment; and that therefore it is much more probable, that the last times intended were the last years of Jerusalem and its polity, than the concluding age of the religious world.

The examination of the four remaining passages may be despatched more expeditiously. Two occur in the Epistles of St. Paul to Timothy. In 1 Tim. iv. 1-6. it is written, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times men shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, &c. If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ." Now, in the first place, it appears reasonable, on intuition, that the latter times meant in this place must be, in part at least, contemporary with the people to whom Timothy ministered, because Timothy was to put the brethren in remembrance of what was about to happen. Also the departure of some from the faith, and the appearance of seducing spirits in these latter times, correspond with the signs of the extinction of Jerusalem. And, thirdly, heresies respecting meats and marriage are known to have arisen prior to the year 70. This Epistle was written about the year 64. Thus there is considerable evidence of the times mentioned coinciding with the last days of Jerusalem. The following reason may be assigned for their not implying the era of Christianity. There appears such a particular description given of the people, as would suit only a particular time. There had been instances of the Spirit speaking expressly of apostasy and spiritual seduction, and

of iniquity in general, occurring before the fall of Jerusalem. There had not been such predictions for the Christian period.

But the same kind of information is afforded to Timothy in the 2nd Epistle, (ch. iii. 1—9, 13; iv. 3, 4,) in which places a similar idea of time occurs. "This know also, in the last days perilous times shall come; for men shall be lovers of their own selves: from such turn away." Here can be no question that the times alluded to were coincident with the life of Timothy; because, not only would it be unreasonable to imagine that St. Paul was so particular in instructing Timothy about them, if they did not concern his ministry; but the wicked characters mentioned as to come in the last days, were to arise in his time, for he was enjoined to turn away from them. This Epistle was written also about the year A. D. 64. Similar observations might be made here as on the passage of the former Epistle, immediately preceding; and a repetition of correspondent instruction relative to the time seems to make it more exclusively referable to the days of Timothy, and to the scene closing on Jerusalem.

The eighth text for our consideration occurs in the 18th verse of the Epistle of Jude. By a reference to verses 4, 12, 16, 19, it will evidently appear that St. Jude was writing of impious persons who had already appeared: and he reminds his disciples that it had been foretold, that there should be mockers in the last time. This clearly fixes the time on the days in which he wrote his Epistle, not long before the year A. D. 70. It may be observed also, that the description of the circumstances of the times is not

unlike the general account of the apostasy fore-running the destruction of Jerusalem; and that the particularity of the description marks it for the times near the date of the Epistle, to the exclusion of the Christian age.

The only remaining passage is Heb. i. 2. From this possibly no evidence to our purpose can be obtained, beyond the fact that some at least of the last days spoken of were those in which the Epistle was indited, or about A. D. 60.

A brief recapitulation of the results of our inquiry into the times signified, will subserve to distinctness.

We discover from Acts ii. 17, that the words used by St. Peter, most undoubtedly referred to the time then passing. In all the other nine instances of the recurrence of the idea in the New Testament, the same reference is apparent. From Acts ii. 17, it is not improbable that the last days intended were the last days of Jerusalem. In two of the nine supposed parallels, (1 John ii. 18 : James v. 1—3,) it is almost certain that the last days of Jerusalem were signified, and no other time. In three others, (1 Pet. i. 5, 20, and 2 Pet. iii. 1—3,) a similar degree of certainty is seen in favour of the epoch of the Jewish history; the great difference from the preceding examples being this, that the expressions apply also to the judgment of the world: the idea of the era of Christianity, in its general integrity, appears to be excluded. In two other instances, (1 Tim. iv. 1—6 : 2 Tim. iii. 1—9, 13; iv. 3, 4,) the Christian era does not appear to be signified. There are evident signs of the times of the writer, and a probability of their referring to the state of the church, about the time

of the fall of Jerusalem. In the eighth instance, (Jude v. 18) there is no appearance of any time but such as coincided with and bordered upon the date of the Epistle, and the circumstances detailed are very referable to the case of that devoted city.

From the ninth and last (Heb. i. 2,) no argument whatever can be deduced for the period extending through the Christian age.

On the whole, in no one case is it shown in Scripture that the era of Christianity is intended: in eight of the examples—in some of them more particularly—it appears probable that that period is not signified, but the last days of Jerusalem; and in all the ten passages, that there are evident indications of time previous to its fall; and, on the ground of uniformity, it may be believed that all the expressions are properly of the same acceptation.

Thus, in conclusion, it would appear that it is untenable to suppose that the terms employed refer to the Christian era, and in a high degree probable that they point to the last days of the capital of Judea. (Note L.)

But other, and perhaps stronger arguments remain in favour of our limitation of the gifts of prophesying in contemplation to the apostolic age. By referring to Acts ii. 16—20, it will be seen that this effusion of the Spirit was to take place, these oratorical powers to be conferred, this conversion of the sun into darkness, and of the moon into blood, to occur in the last days, and before the great and notable day of the Lord. Now the exclusive advocates of the last days of the world, are very apt to imagine and believe, that the "great and notable day of the Lord"

means in this place the day of judgment. The truth is, as I trust it will appear on a little examination, that "the great and notable day of the Lord" is not in one passage to be interpreted by the day of judgment, but the time of Jerusalem's subversion, A. D. 70.

The expressions of "the great and terrible," or "great and dreadful day of the Lord," and "great and notable day of the Lord," have not occurred more than three times in the whole Bible. The words "great and notable day of the Lord," in this particular collocation, are found only in one passage, Acts ii. 20. The 16th and four following verses in this chapter, as quoted by St. Peter, were taken, with slight variation, from the book of Joel, (chap. ii. 28—31). The translations also of the quotation and of the original do not verbally accord. In the prophecy we read "the great and terrible day of the Lord." It is evident however, without the least question, that the same day is signified in both places. We may therefore speak of the day as if it bore in both only one of those appellations. And as in the third passage alluded to, the English translation gives to the "day of the Lord" the epithets of "great and terrible," we will investigate the use and signification of the original terms under this title.

But there is a fourth passage, though not exactly like, yet so extremely similar in point of expression, (Joel ii. 11,) that it must be very particularly noticed. It follows an account of a divine visitation given in the early part of that chapter. The "day of the Lord" is said to be "great and very terrible." There are commentators of high repute, who con-

tend that the language in which this visitation is predicted, is a figurative description of a plague of locusts on the country of the Jews. We will, for the sake of argument, allow the truth of their interpretation. It will immediately follow from this view of the matter, that the day of the Lord which was to be great and very terrible, would be a day of temporal visitation, it being identified with the plague, and that it could not mean the day of eternal judgment. There are other expressions likewise in the same description, which apply the visitation to this world; and there can be no doubt that a day of the Lord which is called "great and very terrible," does signify a worldly calamity inflicted on the Jewish nation.

What we have thus deduced is a strong presumptive argument, that the day which is described in the same chapter of Joel as "the great and terrible day of the Lord," should also mean a temporal visitation. It is admitted indeed to have such signification by those who understand a plague of locusts in the military phraseology of the foregoing prophecy. The obscuration of the sun, and the transmutation of the moon into blood, are ideas appropriate in the prophetic books to the circumstances of a temporal nature, and are not applicable to the last judgment. It is, besides, more in accordance with the Jewish religion that temporal judgments should be denounced against the people, than those which are eternal.

But then the question arises—which of all the national calamities that befel the Jews, is likely to be the one denominated "the great and terrible day

of the Lord." If we turn to the fourth place where the day is mentioned, we shall have little difficulty in making our selection. It is Malachi iv. 5, the last verse but one of the Old Testament, and runs as follows: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." It is well known that the person here designated by Elijah, was John the Baptist,—he who came, as Christ said, in the spirit of Elias or Elijah. He was, by the prophecy, to come before the great and terrible day of the Lord. So that whatever calamity was designed, we are not to look for it previous to the advent of the Baptist. It must have happened subsequently to this event; and the destruction of Jerusalem, its inhabitants, and their religious system, immediately occurs to the mind as the historical fact that must have been intended. It was, in the first place, a temporal calamity; it was, secondly, the first adversity of a very serious nature that happened to the nation after the appearance of St. John; and thirdly, nothing equal to it in importance can have been experienced by the Jews in later times; for it was the termination, as it were, of their national and political existence.

And in confirmation of the opinion that it was this particular visitation of the Almighty which was pretended by the prophet, it is an extremely remarkable coincidence, that the terms of the Saviour's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, as regard the solar system, accord very intimately with the declaration

of Joel in the citation of St. Peter : there is the appearance of their being prefigurations of the same event. Besides which, those interpreters who advocate the plague of locusts, are of opinion that Joël, in this second allusion to a day of terror, signified the destruction of Jerusalem.

As therefore it appears some great national distress of the Jews was intended ; as it was to occur after the appearance of John the Baptist ; as there happened one temporal visitation on a national scale, and only one of extraordinary magnitude posterior to his advent ; as the destruction of Jerusalem was foretold by Christ in similar terms, and as this was likewise a coming of Christ denounced with as much of the language of terror by Christ, as by the prophet ; and filling as large and important a space in the Jewish history as the prophecy of Joel would warrant us to expect ;—it is impossible not to perceive sufficient evidence for the belief, that “the great and terrible day of the Lord” in the Acts of the Apostles signified the demolition of the Jewish city and temple, and the abolition of the Mosaic rites, by the armies of imperial Rome.

But it ought not to be omitted, that there are other interpreters, as well the ancient Jewish expositors, as christian commentators of well-earned celebrity—and among the latest of the members of our own church, Bishop Tomline—who maintain the opinion, which is probably the most rational view of the prophecy, that the prophetic army of Joel does really signify a military expedition. In case of the truth of this interpretation, the day of the Lord imports a siege, and therefore it is more likely still

to be the siege of Jerusalem. And if it be shown, as I think it might, to be probable, that the same event is prefigured in both the passages concerning the day of the Lord, in the 2nd chapter of Joel, it becomes in a higher degree evident that the Roman invasion of Judea is the event in contemplation. But I am content to place the correctness of this application of the prophecy on the lowest ground which we have taken.

These are the inferences which we have at present drawn on this part of our subject. Scripture is opposed to our understanding "the last days" in Acts ii. 17, as of the Christian era, and the "great and terrible day of the Lord" as of the day of judgment. On the contrary, it is favourable to our interpreting the former expression of the last days of Jerusalem, and the latter of its destruction. An effusion, then, of the Spirit of God was foretold as to take place (according to Acts ii. 17, 20,) in the last days, and not after, but before the great and terrible day of the Lord; that is, was to happen in the time immediately previous to the fall of Jerusalem, or between the coming of John the Baptist, and the year 71 of our Lord. Hence we derive one very convincing argument for the conclusion that the prophecy was fulfilled in those days, and that it is not being fulfilled in our own; and that to contend that men and women are now taught to preach or prophesy by the Spirit in the same manner as they were then, is proceeding farther than we are warranted by this prophetic passage.

There are not wanting several corroborations of this view of the text under consideration, which we

shall almost immediately adduce. It is not unworthy of observation, that it would be difficult to make it appear probable that the words of Joel, as far as regards prophesying, were not to be confined in their application entirely to the day of Pentecost. He leads us to imagine that the fulfilment of that part of the prediction is not to be witnessed or expected at any other time: in answer to the cavilling and unbelieving multitude, when they heard the disciples utter their prophetic inspirations, his words are, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." But, not to lay much stress on this point, we have hitherto seen, 1st, that the persons who claim immediate inspiration like the Apostles, merely on the ground of precedent, are not to be believed according to Scripture, for they have no scriptural testimonials, and are guilty of wickedness in assuming more than the Apostles, or even Christ himself. And, 2ndly, that the prophesying predicted as taking place in the last days, does not serve them in point of time. Now, 3rdly, admitting, as it is true, that the Apostles received some inspiration of truth directly from heaven, we will show farther, that it is to be believed, both according to Scripture and reason, that teaching men by the Spirit, without the intervention of oral or written instruction, was not intended by God to come down to our days, and that therefore it does not descend to them: it was a mode of teaching which was not continued long. This plan, if I may so speak, of the Almighty was early changed for another.

Let not this assertion be immediately denied the credit which we claim for it, and charged in the first

instance with irrationality. We are not called upon by Scripture to make all the dispensations of God appear agreeable to reason. Some of the reasons for his dealings may be, and probably are, far above out of our sight. But we can show that God did depart from his original design,—and not only this, but that it is reasonable to suppose that he should so depart from it.

If it is insinuated or affirmed, that it is unreasonable to suppose that any divine scheme or system should, during the existence of the world, be discontinued,—if this is the ground on which the opinion is opposed, upon this we will join issue; and would request those who thus hastily decide, to reflect that God has before now, in other matters, designed what He afterwards abolished; and therefore it is not folly, as may be imagined, to think that He should do away with *any* thing which he has established. God ordained the Jewish ceremonial law: he set up the religion of the ancient Jews, and abolished it, in a later period, when it had stood its time, and served its purpose. So that it cannot be denied that God should reverse any institution which he had ordained, and argued from thence, that it is unreasonable to suppose that He should cease to inspire the minds of men altogether as He did those of the Apostles. God may, it appears, discontinue what He commenced. He has already done it in one instance, certainly; and that is not the only instance, by many, in which He has put a period to that which he instituted, and in which he has changed his course. He, at the first, enabled his ministers to work miracles, to give sight to the blind, to heal the sick, and to raise the dead,

with other deeds of an extraordinary nature. This He does not now : He has altered his plan in this matter. At all events, we perceive that God does alter plans of his own appointment : and therefore, as far as the argument goes about the unreasonableness of his ever abolishing what He once allowed or decreed, He may depart from his former dispensation in any other matter, should He see fit in his wisdom so to do. It may be perfectly reasonable to suppose that He should alter his mode of teaching and calling ministers, if circumstances changed. What He might think fit to do under some circumstances, he might not under others. What He might judge an act of wisdom towards men in one situation, he might deem the reverse if their situation were different. There is nothing contrary to reason in all this. Now what was it that God certainly thought good at the first, when Christ preached, and immediately afterwards? He chose out of the people, for some of his followers and some of his ministers, several of the lowest and most ignorant of them. Many of them were men who, most probably, could neither write nor read. Christ preached to them and conversed with them. He suffered them—at least in particular one of them—to follow their trades. He taught them not to take any thought what they should say when they were brought into troubles, for that it should be given them by the Holy Spirit what they should speak. And doubtless he taught them by his Spirit ; he gave them the knowledge of his will, and enabled some of them to write his holy word or the Scriptures. This is what God certainly did at first. The men who were thus taught of God

might work at their trades, for they wanted no time for learning. It was given them, in great measure, what they were to speak solely by the Spirit. And we can discern from Scripture, and by other light with which God has blessed us, some of the reasons why He did make choice of such humble and unlearned men for the instruments of preaching the gospel at the first, and why He taught them at the first in such a manner. God, we read, chose such persons for ministers then, that the glory of establishing Christ's religion might appear to be all of God, and not of men. He could, we may easily imagine, have called and chosen rich and powerful men for his ministers in the outset of Christianity, if he had pleased: certain it is, that Christ called on men of another class, and they obeyed his call. And it is one of the innumerable proofs to us that Jesus Christ was sent from God, that His religion was set up by the preaching of poor unlearned men. If men, rich, powerful, and learned, had been the first preachers of our religion, we might have feared that it gained ground in the world, because they were rich, powerful, and learned. We might have feared that it became popular through the worldly influence of these persons; by their bribing some men to promote it; by their arguing others into a belief of it; or by their being followed as known to be possessed of the greatest abilities: then we might perhaps have feared that our religion was an invention of man. But when we see the then religion of the world overthrown by a handful of poor unlettered fishermen; when we see all the favourite notions of the Gentiles, all their prejudices preached down by men who pos-

sessed hardly the means of buying bread; and the religion of Jesus, the religion which opposed their sensual gratifications, raised in the place of the deepest rooted idolatry and worldliness,—all by men destitute of worldly power and profane learning,—bringing even the wisest and the most accomplished heathens to their opinion,—not converting merely the poor and the ignorant, but actually turning the great, and the powerful, and the learned to the same faith as themselves, against all their prejudices and interests and passions;—when we see this effected by a few, to all appearance, insignificant men, we see reason to believe that the finger of God was in the work: it could not, we believe, have been all done, unless God were with the men. And thus we have one ground of confidence that our religion came from God. This is one of the arguments we use with unbelievers in Scripture; and we perceive from Scripture that we reason right in this matter. We read there that God chose the weak things of the world to confound the strong, and the foolish things to confound the wise; and that the Apostles had the treasure of the gospel in earthen vessels, that the glory might be of God, and not of men. God taught these poor and unlearned men, in part, by the conversation of Christ; but, in part also, by his Spirit, we will say, immediately. At least they had little or no scholastic learning; some of them, for aught we know, had literally none at all. And then, as has been seen, God gave them the power of working miracles to convince the people to whom they preached that God was with them, and that what they did deliver was God's truth.

Thus did God at the beginning. This we grant. But it must now be observed, that the New Testament was not written at the time of which we speak, except, not improbably, the Gospel according to St. Matthew. Before the New Testament was composed, and when the religion of Christ was being instituted, then God taught ministers in the manner described, and gave them miraculous powers as signs and witnesses that they were divinely commissioned. And I will venture to affirm, that men cannot devise a mode so wise as this by attestation of miracles, of setting up a religion in the world. I do not say that God could not have introduced the religion of Christ in another method; He did indeed prepare for its reception, partly by prophecy and other prefigurative means. I contend that the human imagination cannot strike out a more satisfactory mode of dispensation in such a case. If a founder of a divine religion have no written word of God to preach, nor any human teacher to instruct him in God's will, we must suppose that he is taught by God directly and immediately; and if men were taught the peculiarities of Christianity, at the period of its fuller revelation, only by the Spirit, or by any teachers not accredited by persons of authority; if there were, as then, no New Testament acknowledged as the word of God, by which to judge of those peculiarities; it appears impossible that the people could be justified in believing such heaven-taught and unaccredited preachers, unless there were some peculiar and extraordinary evidences of their inspiration. Suppose, at such a time and under such circumstances, any one of the Apostles had accosted us, but without miracles, in affirmation

of his divine mission to establish a new religion on the earth.—“ Whatever novelties I teach, (he might have said) are the will of God ;” should we not have required some proof that such was the divine will? should we, in reason, have been obligated to believe it? We had no New Testament to examine, that we might ascertain whether he spoke agreeably to God’s word. The preacher was to us perhaps a perfect stranger. We knew not, if he were otherwise, by his outward appearance, or on his bare assertion, that he was a messenger of heaven. He might be uttering, for anything we knew to the contrary, the ravings of his own imagination : he might be an impostor. If an Apostle, or even Christ himself, had addressed men, in the first instance, only on his own affirmation, it is not to be supposed that he would have been believed by any reasonable creature. I scruple not to aver, that I do not believe there is one wise man now living on the earth, let him believe in and adore the Lord as truly and devoutly as he may, who would have credited him, had he heard him declare that he came from God, and taught the will of God, if he had not afforded him some proof of his authority, either by miracle or by that which partakes of a miraculous nature, such as the completion of prophecy, or evidences of that character. When no New Testament existed and was acknowledged as divine, and when the religion of Christ was to be first planted, then God ordained that his ministers should be taught, in part, directly by his Spirit from above, and that they should be endowed with miraculous faculties, to convince the people of their heavenly commission. And as the ministers of the gospel were thus supernaturally instructed, and otherwise

taught by conversation with the Author of their faith, we see that no time was required for learned pursuits; and that therefore the want of leisure for study offered no impediment to their employing themselves in manual occupations, or any worldly calling for their livelihood. But though it might seem good to the Holy Ghost to order things in this manner under these circumstances, it by no means follows that he might not otherwise ordain when the New Testament was written, and its divinity established, and when the religion of Christ had once obtained a footing among mankind. When the New Testament was not written, it seems to us to be almost necessary to teach the first preachers of Christianity immediately from heaven, or by the instrumentality of one or more so instructed; but when that document is presented to the world, the necessity disappears. And when once Christ and his Apostles had established the religion, partly by the influence of miracles and other supernatural attestations, we can perceive that it is (to say the least) not necessary that succeeding teachers should be invested with a miraculous agency. The teachers who followed might be appointed by them; and when it was known that the New Testament was produced by divine inspiration, we can readily comprehend that preachers might appear and be believed without any credentials above the order of nature. They might say (and it might be ascertained that they spoke the truth) that they were appointed to preach by the Apostles; that they presented themselves as teachers of the people by their authority,—as teachers of the will of God, agreeably to his written word in the

New Testament. These declarations might be verified, and might satisfy those to whom they were addressed. Though miraculous powers might be required in one case, they might not be indispensable in the other. There is nothing foolish or unreasonable in supposing, that God might begin with one mode of instruction, and afterwards institute another in its place. I would add, that it is highly reasonable to suppose that God would not teach his ministers, without any intermediate means, from heaven, after the New Testament was composed. Does not the Bible contain every doctrine necessary for man's salvation ; and is it a rational supposition, that God should teach men by miracle when in possession of a volume thus comprehensive? If ministers, on the other hand, were appointed by the Apostles, and for the purpose of preaching according to the Scriptures, this appointment would be warrant sufficient to satisfy every reasonable inquirer after truth, and therefore further credentials of an extraordinary nature could not be reasonably desired or expected. Thus, on the whole, it appears not contrary, but agreeable to reason, that the Almighty should, as we have predicated, change his mode of instructing the ministers of his will, when the Scriptures had been written, and the Apostles had established their apostolical character.

Now what appears to us thus reasonable for God to do, I undertake to show that God did.

This may be done both by negative and by positive arguments.

First, negatively. It has already been argued, in the present chapter, that the last days mentioned in

Acts ii. did not extend beyond the time near the destruction of Jerusalem; and that the preaching of men and women, such as occurred on the day of Pentecost, is to be confined to the same limits. We will now advance a step in our argument, by maintaining that the most remarkable gift of the Spirit conferred on that day by the Almighty, was one that is not bestowed on men in these times:—it was the gift of tongues. Certain other spiritual endowments appear to have preceded this event. (Luke xxiv. 45: John xx. 22.) The gift of tongues was one communication to the disciples on the great festival in question, and it makes the principal figure in its history. There were tongues, as of fire, that sat upon each of the Christians there assembled; and they spake with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. And the wonder with the foreign Jews who had resorted to Jerusalem—that amazement which is forcibly expressed in Scripture—was, that they heard persons, who were all natives of Palestine, speaking suddenly in the languages of the various countries whence they had themselves journeyed. These sons and daughters were enabled, all at once, to speak with foreign tongues. And it would be impossible to prove that this was not the only gift intended by the prophecy of Joel, as being to be bestowed on the day of Pentecost: at all events, it is one of the principal of the acts of inspiration on that occasion. But the gift of tongues is never bestowed in these times by an immediate illapse. Where can we find one man, who, from knowing nothing whatever of the French, or the German, or the Italian language, or the tongue of any other nation, can, all of a sudden,

speak it well, so that he might be able to preach the gospel in the country to which it belongs? The most remarkable spiritual gift which distinguishes, according to Scripture, the great day of Pentecost, is certainly withheld from the Christians of our day. This is another ground, then, for asserting that the prophecy of Joel is not being fulfilled in these times; and that the divine method of instructing the ministry is not such as at the origin of Christianity, from any evidence in this particular portion of Scripture.

Other negative proofs might be given, that the preachers who lay claim to immediate inspiration are under delusion. It might be expounded, that those persons do not always utter doctrines and opinions which concur. They sometimes speak discordantly from one another and from themselves, which could never happen if they were all moved and taught to preach by the one unerring Spirit. Again, they very frequently differ from the Scriptures: this would never be the case, if they were prompted by that Spirit from whom the Scriptures proceeded. And if such pretenders to divine inspiration as have not any knowledge of letters, and yet demand of the people to believe that they are enabled to preach the will of God solely by the Spirit, were to be prevailed upon to make such a satisfactory experimental proof of their spiritual endowments as might be devised, there can be no doubt, in any well-informed mind, that they would proclaim, to a certain extent, their error to the world. Let any considerable number of such persons be at one time placed individually in a state of separation, denied access to any human adviser, and be inquired of concerning any given

number of texts of Scripture, of rather difficult interpretation, and let it be seen whether they would render such an account of the words of God, as could be believed to be dictated by the Spirit of truth.

We have, at this point of our inquiry, proceeded thus far. Scripture teaches, that the prophesying of the sons and daughters mentioned in Acts ii., was to take place only in and about the last days of Jerusalem, and that the like effusion of the Spirit is not to be expected in this age; and experience and reason teach, that the immediate inspiration of the true understanding of the word of God is withheld from existing claimants. These arguments are all to be included in our proof. But to come to the second branch of our subject immediately under consideration: there are *positive* grounds for the assertion, that the divine inspiration of the truth is differently modified since the day in question. This may be proved by the examples of Timothy and Titus. The Almighty did not teach them by the Spirit, without the intervention of learning. They were two eminent ministers of Christ; two of the most honourable and honoured members of the ministry mentioned in the book of life; men highly respected and panegyricized by St. Paul; so much distinguished as to have received between them three Epistles from that illustrious Apostle, by divine impulse—those Epistles which stand in our sacred canon. Now, in the first place, those Epistles contain a great many instructions to Timothy and Titus for their discharge of the ministerial duties. It is very evident, only from this circumstance, that these persons, Timothy and Titus, were not taught by the Spirit

immediately from heaven. They were instructed, in part, by means of these letters: they had to read *them*: reading was required in these Apostles. The Epistles were written to Timothy and Titus about the year A.D. 65, five years before the fall of Jerusalem. The New Testament was nearly all written then. Thus, when the New Testament had been committed to writing, God had, at least, begun to teach his ministers, partly by the intermediate use of written instruments. But this is not all. Two of St. Paul's instructions to Timothy were actually to this effect: "Till I come, give attendance to reading, and take heed unto thyself, and to the doctrine." (1 Tim. iv. 13, 16.) But if Timothy and Titus were taught immediately by the Spirit, why write to them at all? and why desire either to give attendance to reading, and to take heed to doctrine? Another mode, in fact, of teaching the minister was adopted instead of direct inspiration, in the cases of Timothy and Titus; and they would not have needed to read, and to be careful in their attention to the christian doctrine, had they been instructed only by divine afflatus. The primitive inspiration of divine truth began to cease, therefore, just previous to the destruction of the Jewish capital, which exactly coincides with our account of the effusion of the Spirit, as on the day of Pentecost, even if it included the immediate communication of saving knowledge, being restricted in its date to the latter period of its existence. Besides which, Timothy and Titus were appointed ministers, by St. Paul and others, and they worked no miracles that we know of. Hence, what we showed to be reasonable, that after the composi-

tion of the Scriptures, and the establishment of the apostolic authority, ministers should not be endued with supernatural and extraordinary gifts, and should read for instruction, did actually come to pass. Timothy and Titus were appointed by a pre-ordained minister, St. Paul, and learnt, doubtless by spiritual aids, from written documents.

Then, as to tradesmen or men of business assuming the ministerial office. The licence was given when men were taught, as St. Paul, by the Spirit to write and speak the word; but if those who succeeded him in the ministry were to read and study, and thus to acquire their knowledge of religion; it might not be agreeable to the will of God, that his ministers should devote their time to worldly affairs: they might require the bulk of their time for following religious studies. And if we discover that this was enjoined on preachers in later times, about the year A.D. 70, this will impart fresh strength to our argument, that the immediate illumination from above contended for, was to cease about that particular juncture. Now this is really the fact. St. Paul, in directing Timothy to give attendance to reading, to doctrine, and the gift that was in him, goes on by commanding him to "*give himself wholly to them.*" (1 Tim. iv. 15.) Which means, of course, not to exclude every subject whatever besides religion entirely from his thoughts; but, at least, to make his spiritual profession the chief business of his life,—to dedicate by far the greater portion of his time to its pursuits. I think it must be conceived, by any impartial person, that it is intended it is hardly possible for a minister to be too attentive to the duties of his

office. But there is another sentence addressed to Timothy, perhaps stronger. St. Paul calls Timothy a soldier warring for Jesus Christ; and he teaches him to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ; and then he directly adds, "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." (2 Tim. ii. 4.) This rule, coupled with the former advice immediately preceding, sufficiently proves our point.

Another argument for the extraordinary and temporary nature of the gifts bestowed on the day of Pentecost, is deducible from the case of the prophetesses. If it were intended by the effusion of the Spirit on that day, that women were to be taught by the Spirit, and were to teach in the church of Christ through all generations, of course it would then be perfectly agreeable to the will of God, that the ministrations of women, as preachers, should continue perpetually. But if God soon afterwards ordained that women should not teach in the church, then it must be evident that the prophesying of the women on the day of Pentecost, or at least the fulfilment of the prediction of Joel, as regards the ministry of prophetesses, was a particular case distinct from the exercise of any prophetic powers in subsequent ages. The fact is so. In 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35, it is written: "Let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." And in 1 Tim. ii. 11, 12:

“ Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.” These passages were written by St. Paul some twenty years after the day of Pentecost; and whatever was meant by the prophesying of the daughters in the books of Joel, and of the Acts, it could not mean that women were to teach the church of Christ in after times. This is another evidence that the prophecy concerning the last days does not concern our own; and a proof that those persons disobey God who encourage women to preach in our own time and country. I know it is imagined, that St. Paul must have excluded from his prohibition of female ministrations of the word, the subjects of such divine inspiration as was communicated on the day of Pentecost. But, supposing that the women who received the gift of prophecy, according to Joel, were permitted to exercise it, as teachers in the church, during their lives; to contend that there was always to be an exception made in favour of such persons, is to predetermine the question: it is assuming that such prophetesses were continually to arise, and teach the church from time to time. Now St. Paul's prohibition is general, and abundance of independent proof has been given in these pages, of the temporary duration of the kind of prophesying which characterized the day of Pentecost; and this prohibition to women, as Jerusalem verged on its ruin, is only in accordance with an inference which is sufficiently established without it, but still receives from it additional substantiation.

Now, to recapitulate part of what has been advanced, and to draw one or two conclusions. It

appears, according to the word of God, that, subsequent to the ascension, about A. D. 35, and some years afterwards, the endowments of the ministry differed from those which they received but a few years prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. At the first, the ministers were taught by the Spirit of God immediately the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, except as far as they acquired them from conversation with Christ: just about the year A. D. 70, the Scripture which was in being at that time informs us, that a means appointed by the Almighty for the instruction of his ministers was reading. At the first, it appears that women prophesied or preached just before the destruction of Jerusalem: Scripture is written, which teaches us that women are not to preach. At the first, when ministers were taught directly by the Spirit, the Scripture allows them to work at a trade: just about the fall of Jerusalem, we find ministers had to read and study, and were not to be persons of a worldly calling. Now how can we reconcile these seeming disagreements? There can be no contradiction in Scripture: the way of understanding them has been proposed. It appears that God altered his mode of teaching his ministers, between the commencement of Christ's ministry and the time of the destruction of the Jewish metropolis; and this has appeared, in a former part of the present chapter, a reasonable change. Understand the different portions of Scripture under examination by this clue, and all is cleared up, without contradiction and without confusion. Then if it be inquired, how ministers are to be taught and to live *according to Scripture*;—are

they *now* according to Scripture to be taught by the Spirit immediately? are they *now* according to Scripture to be men of business? are women *now* according to Scripture to preach? The answer is in the negative. According to Scripture, these things are *not now* to be. It was so at the first: but a new order of things was instituted afterwards, when the Scriptures were written. And as we are not living in the infancy of Christianity, but since the completion of the scriptural canon; the revelation which rules us in these days is, that which forbids women to be preachers, and which directs the ministers of the church to be men of learning, and not to devote themselves to secular occupations.

These are matters for the consideration of those persons who allow female preaching, and who minister to congregations and follow the business of the world, or who approve of such ministers and ministration: to which it may be added, that the disobedience to God in ministering to congregations by a man engaged in trade or any worldly calling, is much greater, if possible, in these days than in the time of Timothy. There is now very much more to be learnt. To have all things done in decency and order according to the will of Christ, as declared in Scripture, is the dissenters' desire. Then, in the name of Christ, let them be called upon, at least not to suffer women to preach; not to follow any preachers who cannot read, nor any whose days are chiefly spent in the engagements of busy life; when nearly all their time is required by ministers for the prosecution of their studies, and the active duties of their station. Moreover, let the female and

illiterate preachers perceive that they are opposing the word of God, in assuming the ministerial office. The spirit by which they are moved to preach is contrary to that word, and is therefore not the Spirit of God within them—but a spirit of evil.

It is most wicked presumption to pretend to understand the will of God without the knowledge of his word; and it is extremely foolish to undertake to teach the contents of a book, without being able to read any of its pages: and the folly of such an undertaking becomes, in the case of the Scriptures, a sin of no trivial character. But it may be imagined, that if a person has but acquired the art of reading, that he possesses then every necessary qualification of learning for a minister of the word, and is entitled, if he feels himself moved by any internal impulse, to commence the ministerial profession. With respect to the ability to read the English language being all the scholarship that is requisite for a right understanding of Scripture, ignorance never broached a much more egregious absurdity. It may be observed in the first place, that it is impossible to be certain of understanding any one verse of the New Testament correctly, without a knowledge of the tongue in which it was originally written. But it is not merely with single verses that the expositor of Scripture is concerned. He has to investigate various doctrines which arise from a consideration of many of its parts, and to deliver those which are most needed by his disciples. And for the due execution of these important functions, many talents are requisite, how-

ever difficult it may be to prove the necessity of them to multitudes. It is impossible, in the nature of things, to convince men of the need of possessing those qualifications of which they have no idea. It might be remarked, but probably with little avail, to the advocates of the ability to read as a competency of literary acquirement, that the New Testament was written not in English, but in Greek; that a good knowledge of both Greek and Latin is necessary to an intimate acquaintance with the fathers of the church, as well as of the Scriptures and commentators upon them; that the Old Testament requires not only Greek but Hebrew, which again cannot be well understood without researches into other tongues, or the benefit of other men's labours; that languages are not learned without long and patient study; that there is great nicety in syntax and etymology, which cannot be acquired without much reading and good instruction from able teachers; that men should know, besides, the histories and customs of ancient times; that it is necessary to inquire into the opinions of writers, on many matters, who have flourished from very remote ages to the present day; that not only study is necessary, but apprehension, discernment, the faculty of calling and comparing distant and relative things together—good judgment and memory, which cannot be well exercised without education and habit; that without study and care, or depending on the decisions of wise and learned men, many passages of Scripture, very commonly useful, may be misunderstood; that there are hundreds of most important passages which do not mean what to many persons they seem

to signify; that well-known truths may easily have wrong turns given them by the illiterate reader of his mother tongue; that a comprehensive view of Scripture, a just perception of its principal doctrines, and a judicious application of them to the spiritual wants of the people, is more than can be attained except by those who add learning to their other qualifications, or receive the instructions of accomplished scholars; that on every scriptural topic, even on the most vital doctrines, dissensions exist, and arguments on almost all sides have been written by men of various abilities; that it is presumptuous and unwarrantable (as we have seen in the early part of our eighth chapter) to declare any doctrine as necessary or conducive to salvation, unless the preacher has a sure conviction of the accuracy of his faith; and that it is impossible to obtain this conviction without being acquainted with, at least, the main arguments of his adversaries; and that this acquaintance with those arguments requires much working of the mines of literature. This is a series of assertions founded in truth, which is in reality a sufficient answer to the pretensions of those who think that no other scholarship is necessary to the formation of a good ministerial character, than the ability to read the Bible in our native language. The illiterate pretender to unconceded inspiration, would doubtless find difficulty in receiving these opinions for truth. It might, however, serve to convince him of his error, if he were to inquire of the more learned among his own connexion, whether they are not substantially correct. Let inquiry be made of the most instructed among dissenting preachers, whether it is their belief, that a man who

is generally employed in some worldly occupation; and has only his English Bible, or perhaps one or two commentators to consult, but has received little or no education beyond reading and writing, is able to be as exact, as proper, and as full, and declare the whole counsel of God so wisely and well, and to be as warranted to preach for truth, as ministers of great learning, who have studied the Scriptures with devotion, with every desirable human assistance, and with earnest and sincere petitions for spiritual succours.

But there are other texts which are made to bear a construction favourable to the conceit of the inutility of learning : one in particular is, "Seek, and ye shall find;" and another, "Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." It is, however, wresting the words to men's own destruction, to act on the opinion that if they do but seek God only by prayer, and do but heartily desire righteousness, they may then certainly depend on attaining their objects. There are particular ways appointed in the Scriptures for acquaintance with God, and the acquirement of righteousness. It is not signified that men may seek God in any way whatever, and be sure to find him; nor that their hunger and thirst after righteousness will be satisfied, if they do not adopt the method prescribed for their satisfaction. Nothing is more common in Scripture than for only a part of a doctrine to be revealed in one place: to understand one text, others are to be taken into consideration. This is true of the two texts before us, as there are others in Scripture which relate to them. But to prove that it is not meant,

that we may seek God in any manner, and yet be sure to find him, it may be necessary only to observe, that just before the words "Seek, and ye shall find," it is written, "Ask, and it shall be given you." (Matt. vii. 7.) If it were true that "Seek, and ye shall find" must bear the meaning which some persons impute to the sentence, it would, on the same principle, be true, that if we pray to God in any way whatever, that we should certainly receive; but there are, it is to be hoped, few believers in the truth of Scripture so ignorant, as to need to be informed that we are to pray agreeably to certain directions given in other parts of Scripture, in order to be accepted. Similarly the word of God elsewhere directs men how they are to seek that they may find. One means is certainly prayer; and, if possible, reading: but another is, as certainly, hearing a well informed and able ministry. So also the appetite for righteousness is to be satisfied in like manner.

Then, again, it is argued by ministers among separatists, that success is a proof of their divine appointment, and that the slower progress, or even retrogression of church principles which are alleged against us, are, if alleged truly, signs of divine displeasure. The multitudes who follow them are a standing and irrefragable evidence of the presence of a favouring deity, and the consequent diminution of our own congregations is a proof of our unscripturality. And the foundation of this argument is professedly laid in the word of God. It is derived from Acts v. 38, 39, where it is written, "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow

it." But to conceive these events, as even many dissenting teachers do, to be divine attestations to the success of a ministry, as evidence of its agreeableness or disagreeableness to God, is one instance of the thousands which show that many exalt themselves into expounders of Scripture, who do not really understand what they profess to teach. The fact is, that the words thus quoted from the book of the Acts, are not the doctrine of God, but of Gamaliel, a Jew. It certainly might be the idea of Gamaliel, that numbers and success were proofs of divine approbation or disapprobation. And the dissenters are welcome to all Gamaliel's authority in favour of the absurd opinion; for that it is an absurd opinion, may be perceived only by reflecting that Christ himself preached three years in his own country with lamentably unsuccessful exertions; that Mahometanism has actually triumphed over Christianity in many parts of the world; and that there are at the present moment more heathens than Mahometans, more Mahometans than Roman Catholics, and more Roman Catholics than Protestants, in the population of the globe. In a word, numbers and success are no proofs, no tests of duty. (See this subject more fully treated in Vol. I. Nos. 10, 11, of "The Churchman.")

But farther it is asked, Is it not plainly written, that "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them?" (Matt. xviii. 20.) Is it intended, by quoting this text, that it is so plain that it cannot be mistaken? that it cannot be misunderstood by imagining it to signify that wherever two or three persons are assembled to

worship in Christ's name, that Christ must approve their meeting and their devotions? and that on this ground it is that dissenters are confident that God must favour their worship, because one thing follows immediately from the other? First, I deny the assumption, that those who assemble to worship in the name of Christ, according as those words are generally understood, must be approved by him for the act; and therefore I deny the consequence that they must be in the right. For example, what will the baptists, the independents, and methodists say of the unitarians? Unitarians disbelieve the atonement by Christ's blood,—they renounce the sanctification by the Holy Spirit; yet they call themselves Christians, and they meet together, in the popular sense of the words, in Christ's name. Will the methodists and others say that Christ is in the midst of them? Yes, we have reason to believe he is, to condemn them. If then the less unscriptural dissenters can perceive that the text is not always to be taken in the most apparent superficial sense, surely they may at least not be quite certain, that because there is such a sentence, that therefore they themselves must be warranted in their separate assemblings. But no fact is better ascertained to the mind of every enlightened reader of Scripture, than what we have just adverted to—that the whole of a doctrine is seldom if ever conveyed in a single text, and that one part of Scripture must not be so interpreted as to contradict another. Now it may be observed, that for men to assemble in the name of Christ, and to receive that approbation from Him which is signified by his being in the midst of them,

there can be no doubt that the meetings were to be sanctioned by his authority. It is also certain that Christ appointed ministers of the gospel during his sojourn on the earth; and evident, that if any persons assembled together professedly in Christ's name, under a minister not appointed by Christ, that they might call their meeting a meeting in Christ's name, but that it really could not be by his authority. Christ could not intend to sanction a meeting of two or three, in opposition to any ministry which he had proposed and approved: according to the common case of having to call in one portion of Scripture to elucidate another, it is signified that Christ approved of the meeting of two or three, if the meeting was not inconsistent with any of his plans and appointments; as, for instance, he approves of family worship where properly conducted. And if Christ has now confined the course of his ministry to a particular ordination by human instruments; if this is a scheme revealed in Scripture of divine institution, and none can be evangelically admitted to the ministry except in accordance with the system; this will show, that if two or three, or two or three thousand, are gathered together contrary to this plan, that Christ would not approve their conduct; and will establish the error of those who pretend that an internal call or disposition to minister what a man believes to be the truth, in defiance of the truly ordained and qualified ministry, is a sufficient authority for undertaking the ministerial office. Now if we examine the arguments of the literary, we shall discover that such divine system really exists.

SECTION II.

Reason favourable not to the creation of ministers by the people, but to that mode of appointing to the ministry followed in the Church of England, viz. by persons previously ordained.

We must now grapple with the arguments advanced principally by our more lettered opponents, who affirm that reason, Scripture, and the contemporaries of the Apostles, all maintain the right of the people to nominate and appoint ministers for themselves; and that the exclusive claims of the episcopal ministry are a political usurpation.

But first, let it be well understood and remembered, that the church does not deny to the people all power in the choice of ministers. In ancient times the people appear to have borne some part in the ceremony of ordination: the people might give their testimony, as far as they could, to the fitness and character of the person intended for the ministry. If, for instance, they knew that such person held opinions contrary to what was taught by the Apostles or other authorized ministers, they might state the facts in their possession. Also, it is reasonable for the people to be qualified to give evidence in many particulars to the moral character of the candidate. Practices of this nature are countenanced by the Church of England. If the people know that the applicant for orders is opposed to any well-ascertained doctrines of Christianity, they have a right to communicate the information to those upon whom the authority of admitting into the ministry in that

society devolves. Similarly again of the moral character. Evidence of these facts is abundantly supplied by the call made on the people in the notice denominated the *Si quis*, and by the appeal of the bishop to them at the ordination. If any improper persons receive imposition of hands for want of attending to these applications, the blame rests certainly with the people rather than with the clergy.

But to our point—the reasonableness or unreasonableness of the people's nominating and appointing ministers of doctrine. It is to be borne in mind, that we are now considering the appointment solely in reference to truth. (See the beginning of Chap. VIII. p. 95.)

By referring to the second section of our seventh chapter, it will be seen that those books which are among the most revered oracles of youth and age in the temple of dissent, rest the reasonableness of the popular election of ministers, in part, on a supposed analogy between that act and the choice, by private individuals, of their own lawyers and physicians. It is argued, that it is as reasonable that men should choose their own preachers of religion, as their own advisers in law and physic. I will first show that reason is not in favour of the dissenter's practice in the nomination and choice of ministers; and secondly, after one or two remarks and references, that it does favour our's, as churchmen, in taking those ministers which have been appointed for us by others.

The argument, presumptively from analogy, now to be noticed, which the dissenters have devised, is of that familiar nature that it is hardly possible to pursue it into any of its absurdities without ap-

pearing not to treat the two learned professions; its source, with becoming respect, or to indulge a propensity for the ludicrous. The duty, however, of exposing the fallacy of their particular mode of reasoning, is not of our own choosing; it is imposed upon us by those with whom the argument originated. It shall at least be my endeavour to conduct this discussion with all due regard to gravity.

There is one idea which ought to be constantly carried in mind throughout this part of our subject, in order to its thorough comprehension; and that is, that we are not inquiring into what is beneficial to the members of any profession whatever, but to the community who are to reap the advantages of their talents.

In examining the analogical argument, we shall be obliged to deny that in several respects the analogy obtains. The question of reason, as to the choice of ministers, concerns very particularly the erection of hymen to the ministerial office: it does not turn merely on the adoption of some ministers who are already made in preference to others. The people do not give the surgeon his diploma, nor enrol the name of the attorney in any court of Westminster, or commission either to commence practice in any particular residence. All the people do, generally in the analogical cases, is to select from those practitioners who are already established. The supposed resemblance, therefore, between elections in law and physic and divinity by the people, in one respect does not go far enough to justify a comparison.

There is another feature in the two assumed cases/ which finds in divinity no parallel. Not only are the

professions of law and physic adorned by a minority of their members, whose success in practice has placed them above almost all rivalry and competition—men, certainly, whose services the body of the people cannot command, and who therefore may be regarded almost as exceptions to the general rule, but the success of the bulk of practitioners in the middle walks of either profession, is frequently visible, from advantageous positions, in their felicitous treatment of disease, and in the triumphs of litigation. And in this very article of ascertained success, lies, as will be seen on a slight examination, an essential difference between the lawyer, the physician, and the divine. It may be more difficult than is imagined, from success to gauge the merits of the secular professor; but certainly the time for trying those of the divine on the same grounds, with equal accuracy, does not arrive in this probationary state. So much on these heads for the present.

But let us connive a moment at any want of analogy in the assumed cases. The dissenter contends that "every man has as good right" in reason "to choose his own pastor, as his lawyer or his physician." (p. 73, line 1—3.) Undoubtedly every man has, supposing men were all well skilled in physic, law, and divinity, and were all candidates for public favour, to be subjected to a general examination for approbation. It is an argument that suits admirably a universal state of great knowledge, and true wisdom, and a general probationary system; but not men as they are, and existing customs. We must argue for men possessed with various degrees of ignorance on all the three professions.

entangled with much perverseness of information, and with a view to usages which require conformity. I deny not, from reason merely considered, the right of the people generally to choose their own advisers in any of the three professions, regarded abstractedly from fact and circumstance. All men have the liberty, and so far the right, of making any infatuated or wicked selection, by subjecting themselves to its evil consequences, by paying the penalty for their ill-advised procedure. But there is a right and title arising from qualification—a right to choose in any of the three cases, consisting in the ability of making a prudent choice. The goodness of a right and title to act in any instance, must very much depend upon the qualification for action. There must not only be the liberty to elect, but the ability to elect with discretion, to make a good and reasonable title. This ability, I affirm, men in general possess much less in divinity than law and medicine, and that in the latter professions the majority of mankind possess it but very imperfectly. The means of affording them the power of a judicious exercise of the right of the choice of pastors, is the primary object of this investigation.

I presume it will not be disputed, that the proper object of every man, according to reason, in choosing his own legal or medical adviser, is to make choice of the best, of the one who is most qualified by integrity and talent to manage his affairs, and administer to his diseases.

Now if we first reflect on the results of, according to its principle, the legitimate exercise of the universal and unrestricted right in these cases, we shall certainly not discover any thing in *practice* violently

recommending it as a precedent in ministerial elections.

There are, it may fairly be assumed, in every district, some individual professors of law or medicine, whose merits are superior to those of their competitors. If the custom of every man's choosing for himself were, in the cases under consideration, practically good, none, or few but those men of eminence, would obtain the patronage of the people. It is well perhaps for the less qualified of living practitioners, that there is not that discrimination in the public mind which could detect their inferior abilities, though it would certainly be for the advantage of those who require professional assistance. But is all employment bestowed on the most deserving candidates? Nobody is so unacquainted with the world, as not to know that business is largely shared by men of all existing degrees of merit, and that therefore the privilege of free election has not been good in operation; and this, notwithstanding that success is, in some measure, a clue to a right decision.

Similar remarks may be made on the practice of choosing ministers, and with less wonder, in a matter which does not afford the same criterions. Ministers of several denominations, and various talents, occur in every neighbourhood, and yet they have all their followers and adherents: many perhaps enjoy the favour of the people in nearly equal shares. Did the voluntary election of ministers, purely on private opinion, answer well in practice, those only, or principally would be attended whose claims to respect were most substantial. There are, doubtless, several disturbing causes in public life, to the operation of

the theory of free election from conscientious motives. Worldly interest may sometimes incline men in their choice of temporal advisers; but the same influential mover may determine also the mind towards the ghostly counsellor. And in simply observing the result of practice, it is not necessary to explore the producing causes. All that is intended from this review of the matter is, that it certainly cannot be argued that it is good for the people to choose their own ministers merely from observation on their actual practice in that particular respect, or from the practical results in the cases that are presumed to be analogous.

But the great point for consideration is principle; and as we shall find that this is unsound, it is not surprising that the practice is unsuccessful.

The principle of free and independent election, in the case of even temporal professions, is not productive, in the present state of national intelligence, of the effect to be desired—the engagement only of the best practitioners, and the greatest advantage to the body of the people. Some arguments for decision are certainly, as we have observed, afforded by the successful practice of these persons. It may be true, that a physician has wrought for himself an honourable name; but, with very few exceptions, the distinction arising from success will probably be founded in his treatment of one or two particular diseases, or in a few departments of his science: it will be far from extending through the whole circle of pathology. The visible success of the lawyer, again, will probably be most conspicuous in a few branches of his profession: and may, in many instances, de-

pend on the goodness of his cause, rather than on the superiority of his skill: and the publication of these successes may perhaps not extend much beyond the number who have enjoyed the most favourable opportunities for observation. These instances of good fortune may be the indexes of eligibility to those who require the sources of the professions in these specific cases; but they will not assist greatly in determining the choice of a legal agent or medical counsellor for every occasion in life. It appears not to be considered by those who contend for the goodness of men's right to depend on their own judgment in the election of the practiser in medicine or law, that the meritorious distinctions between man and man, except in a few respects, must lie with their acquired knowledge and natural abilities, which are treasures much concealed from public inspection, and of which the public could take but little cognizance. That the general competency of these professors is not submitted to every man for his approval; that among the mass of electors, there is an immense number who have scarcely any acquaintance whatever with either profession; and that therefore, in theory or in principle, as we contended, the multitude cannot be able to judge by themselves of the comparative merits of these professors, even if they were subjected to the ordeal of private judgment, for that it is impossible to judge well of what we do not understand.

But we must not fail to acknowledge, that the literary dissenter contends that it is even more reasonable to choose ministers of religious doctrine, than the lawyer or the physician; inasmuch as the

interests of the soul are more important than those of the body. (See p. 72.) Certainly there is need it should be so, to make the practice at all justifiable. But the observation is unjust, and the ground on which it is defended is most irrational. The argument is quite the other way. If men, by using their private judgment as well as they can, often do not make the best choice of doctrines, as is quite certain from the great diversity in repute as well as of professors of jurisprudence and therapeutics; the more serious and important the objects of the minister are above those of the other counsellors, of the more consequence is it to the people to make a bad choice. It does not matter extremely to a religious man if he consults an unskilful person for the restoration of his health, or the preservation of his property: in these cases, he can at the most lose his life or his estate; and these, great as they are in themselves, are trifles light as air compared to his soul. Now in following a false minister, he may endanger, or even lose *that*; and pastors, transformed like apostles of Christ, may be even ministers of Satan himself. (See 2 Cor. xi. 13—15.) When then it is certain, that in many cases the people do not choose the best lawyers and the best physicians, and are not qualified to form a just estimate of their characters on their own judgments; to insist upon its being even *as* reasonable for them to choose their own ministers, because the choice involves infinitely higher interests, is irrationality almost in the extreme. This can be exceeded only by pronouncing it, as the dissenter has done, *more* so. It is arguing for the use of a right, where the risk of using it wrong is ten thousand times ten

thousand degrees more dreadful. Reason teaches us to be the more cautious, rather than the more forward, to use and depend upon our own private judgments where the matter at stake is of greater consequence. And most assuredly reason is, on other grounds, infinitely more opposed to private judgment, as intended by dissenters in divinity, than in the other sciences. The difficulty of judging right is infinitely less in those others. Success, for instance, is a more certain criterion in them. Success in legal or medical practice, is one of definite kind, which, if experienced, cannot be mistaken by the most ignorant. The recovery of health from sickness, is unequivocal and perfectly intelligible. The termination of a law-suit is evidently victory or defeat. We want no acquaintance with reports and statutes, or our anatomical structure, to enable us to form a decisive opinion. But the success of divines in propagating their doctrines and practices is of various kinds, of which it is impossible to determine that most agreeable to the standard of Scripture, without a sound and comprehensive knowledge of its contents. Nor can we rationally decide which doctrines and practices are the fittest for our adoption, independent of their popularity, without a similar degree and species of information. And this knowledge men in general do not possess. Nor do they who insist upon the excellence of every man's title to choose or create his own minister for himself; on his own private judgment, stipulate for the possession. They allow every man to adopt those teachers who appear in his view to be the best according to the knowledge with which he may happen to be actually furnished. This

is the principle on which they create or choose their ministers: hence, it is not reasonable that they should be able to decide discreetly. The ends which we have in view, are the propagation and diffusion of the truth according to Scripture, and the greatest happiness of the people by obeying its dictates. It is impossible that either of these ends can be served by acting on such a principle as this. It is a principle that opens upon the world a flood-gate of every possible diversity of opinion. It has let in upon us not only the spurious kinds of Christianity, but every other species of existing infidelity. For it is on this principle that the preachers have formed their opinions as well as the people; and while it is acted upon, on both sides, few can be expected to know any approximation to truth in the present contradictory state of theological knowledge, even among its professors, and in the limited communication of learning to various ranks of the people.

Again, by a reference to p. 72, it will be seen that it is argued, that of his opinions who is to teach me doctrines which are to decide my eternal destiny, I ought to be allowed to judge, as well as of his conduct who is to be my example. To this it may be replied, first, that if it is signified that men are qualified generally to judge of the goodness of examples, and therefore must be supposed to be equally able arbiters of doctrine, it might be easily shown to be more difficult to criticise the doctrines professedly derived from Scripture, than the virtue or vice of personal conduct. And easy as it may be to distinguish what is truly exemplary, multitudes in the world on many occasions exercise their liberty of

unwisely, that it would often be for their advantage if discreet and good men were to judge for them and influence them in their decisions. And secondly, that the church does not deny the people a due exercise of judgment; and that there is a wide interval between forming an opinion of doctrines, and nominating men to the ministry in consequence of their tenets.

It is further insinuated, (p. 72,) that the patrons of livings, as patrons, are constituted the judges of the church minister's qualifications. This is one of those numerous assertions, which prove the incompetency of the most celebrated dissenting teachers to give opinions on many church matters. The judges are never the patrons in that capacity, but the bishops always, and in their own episcopal character. This will be better understood on reading subsequent parts of this volume.

That much more than the mere knowledge of the truth, and much more than Mr. Conder imagines, is required as a warrant to preach, has been, in part, shown in Chap. VIII. § 1, and will be further evidenced in our next sections. The same writer's ideas of political right in the case of ordination, of ordination itself, and on one or two other points specified in an extract in Chap. VII. § 2, will also be there noticed.

It deserves to be remarked here, that ministers are intended to teach the people, and the people to learn and obey the ministers, (Chap. V.); that there are various ministers teaching by profession very discordant doctrines; that it is the business of the people to learn what are true doctrines from ministers; and that it is therefore unreasonable, and reversing the order of things as appointed in Scripture, for the

people to decide by themselves what doctrines and practices are true and scriptural; and then to select for themselves preachers out of the discordant multitude whose doctrines and practices are most agreeable to their own notions.

Having thus noticed the principal topics of objection in Chap. VII. § 2, and seen what reason does not recommend for the propagation and extension of religious truth in the world; it is for us next to consider what it *does* teach to be the most probable means of effecting so desirable an object. And it answers, that those alone are qualified to judge and decide what is truth who know its nature; and that the best mode, in theory, of propagating and maintaining truth in the world, is by a series of teachers from the beginning of its establishment, appointed also by teachers exclusively.

I am perfectly aware how absurd and fallacious, in the eyes of all Protestant dissenters but the best informed methodists, is the conclusion to which this assertion will lead us—the apostolic succession; what difficulties they maintain that we incur when we shall be obliged to confess that the Roman Catholic ministers are appointed in the same manner, and that we obtain our orders through their corrupt channel; and that we are guilty of self-contradiction by forbidding separation, being separatists ourselves. Yet, in the face of all the merciless reproach with which we are assailed, I am not afraid to avow that reason advocates the very principle of succession as the most probable means of the transmission of a knowledge of truth from generation to generation.

And so fearless am I of the artillery of opposing

arguments, that I do not hesitate to declare that the identical ordinance which has been unhappily selected from the arsenal of analogy, does, in reality, rebound on its own engineers. The very idea of the legal and medical professions suggests an apt illustration of our rule. I have very little doubt, indeed, that it would raise infinitely the respectability of both, were it impossible for *any* person to practise in either, without undergoing a strict examination from proficientes of the highest authority, and did they constantly exclude every man of immoral character and small attainments. Certain am I that it would tend much to the advantage of such as require the services of those who are conversant in these professions. There would be no candidates before the people for their favours whom they might not with reasonable confidence entrust with their most valuable temporalities.

But leaving the analogy to shift for itself, we will proceed to inquire the mode which reason suggests as most promising of propagating the truth of the gospel from the first through every age.

In stating this suggestion it must always be recollected, that after the time of the Apostles, the ministers of Christianity were not to receive the truths of religion solely by supernatural gift, but through the medium of study and application. We are to imagine then (what was really the fact) that the religion of Christ, at its first publication, was set forth to the people by able and faithful ministers, by persons who truly understood the doctrines of the gospel. The people were indeed taught by Christ himself, and those whom he instructed and ordained. And then

It is for us to consider what reason declares the most probable means of maintaining, throughout all generations, an uninterrupted and unadulterated series of true teachers. We want to find, from the use of reason, the best theoretical method, or at least a rational theory of excluding propagators of false doctrine, and of ensuring only the propounders of truth. If, indeed, it could be supposed that every man who sincerely studied the Scriptures with a devotional spirit, would be sure of arriving at the unity of the faith and to an almost perfect agreement on at least all great points of doctrine; if the Scriptures were so composed that this were to be expected as a generally attainable result of private researches; and if, also, false pretenders and impostors would not arise as heralds of salvation; were men left to themselves to adopt the ministerial profession;—if both these suppositions were true, perhaps it might be said no further security would be desirable. But experience teaches us sufficiently that they are both false; and therefore we clearly perceive that some other security is requisite for the exclusion of error. But to take the clearest view of the matter, it may be well to imagine ourselves as standing in the apostolic age, before men had any or much of that experience to which we have alluded, and inquire what our reason would then dictate as the best preservative of truth. The question lies indeed only between two disputed modes—nomination and appointment, either by teachers or by the people. In cases of danger and difficulty or doubt, the light of nature, an instinctive impulse, often directs us to the most probable means of safety and extrication. I hesitate not to declare,

that the natural sense of mankind must turn, with instantaneous conviction of its absurdity, from the idea that the most qualified teachers to succeed the then existing body, should be ascertained and commissioned by those who are to receive instruction; and that our reason would, on the contrary, immediately recommend, that as there were persons living, the Apostles, who were truly instructed in the doctrines of religion, that none should be permitted to preach to others before they had been examined by the Apostles, as to the soundness and competency of their knowledge of God's word; and that if they were found by them wanting or in error, that they should be forbidden to minister to the church in sacred things, but that licence and authority should be granted them in case of their meetness for the office. I do not say that reason points out exactly whether it should be by one that these preachers should be commissioned, or by more,—probably it would recommend a plurality of voices in the appointment,—but that either by one or more of such ministers it should be made; and that this mode of admission to the ministry should be followed on every succeeding occasion of supply, both in the contemporary and throughout successive periods. It is not intended that this plan of ordination would infallibly exclude the incompetent and unworthy, and convey authority only to the faithful and enlightened aspirant for ministerial honours: imperfections and errors are apt to creep into all institutions among men, in consequence of human corruption and infirmity. But it is most confidently affirmed, in defiance of all contradiction, that, in principle, it is the mode most calcu-

lated, as far as ordination is concerned, to accomplish the end which we have in view—the exclusion of error in doctrine among the ordained; and the principle, the theory, is all that we are contending for in the present instance. When we ask what reason recommends, we inquire what would be the best means of excluding false teachers, and of securing only the well-qualified, if it were properly employed; what plan would produce this result, if adopted and pursued with strict fidelity. And that is the one which we have named. The first teachers would not admit any heretical or incompetent candidates. There would, in the next generation, be a number of true teachers who would, on the same principle, admit none to succeed them but such as possessed every necessary qualification; and the same course would be followed to the remotest posterity. In addition to this it may be observed, that only one thing is requisite to make this system perfect, as far as any system can be perfect,—viz. that the ministers should have the power of subsequently depriving every colleague of his commission to preach, who, after ordination, had contracted heretical opinions.

SECTION III.

The word of God favourable, not to the creation of ministers by the people, but to that mode of appointing to the ministry followed in the Church of England, viz. by persons previously ordained.

We have seen in our last section how reasonable it is, for the preservation of a true knowledge of Scripture in the world, that men should not be suffered

to commence ministering, without having been passed and authorized by those who understand its nature. In this we are to examine into the authority of the practice from Scripture,

So vehement are dissenters in their demands that every thing should be done agreeably to Scripture, it must naturally have been expected, by those who were ignorant of the matter, that there are scriptural precedents for the call of men to the ministry by the voice of the people, or commandments of God to that effect. What must have been their astonishment, when they were first informed (as we noted in section 3, Chap. VII.) that the Scripture contains no example of the kind authorized by God, and that the principal independents know that there is none; and how must that astonishment have been increased by knowing, what we now observe, that there is not a single commandment to the effect to be found in the Holy Volume.

We have not arguments of this nature to answer;—indeed they would have been unanswerable; for if dissenters could have produced us one example or one commandment to the point, there would have been an end of the matter, and we must have owned ourselves in error. But arguments are advanced against us, alleged to be scriptural; and to them, such as they are, our attention will first be directed, in order to prove that they are absurd and invalid.

I commence with the argument taken from Mark ix. 39, mentioned in our Chap. VII, section 3, (which see), and mentioned perhaps, it may with truth be affirmed, with more extravagance of opinion than is usually manifested by the great dissenting authori-

ties. It is indeed extremely difficult to discover how the remotest analogy could be perceived, by the least pretensions of critical sagacity, between the case of this workman in the name of Christ, and the appointment of ministers of the word by the people. It appears, however, that the words "Forbid him not," convey to the mind of the dissenter a remonstrance for attempting to prevent the ministration of their preachers. It is sufficient to observe in reply, that it does not appear that the man whom the Apostles, in their ignorance at the time of Christ, wished to obstruct in his course, was a preacher at all;—certainly it was not the vocation of preaching which they forbid him to exercise. Their object and intention were to prevent him from working miracles, from casting out devils, because he did not follow with Christ. Our Saviour's answer informs them, that a man who wrought miracles in his name, could not, easily at least, speak evil of him: and he is willing to suffer him to dispossess the devils, though he did not follow with him and the Apostles. Besides which it is to be observed, that there is not the slightest ground for a pretence that this man was nominated or ordained by the people: his miraculous power was rather a proof that he was called of God: the words, therefore, "Forbid him not," are not a rebuke for forbidding a man to preach; and the man in question was not called and ordained by the people, but by God. Before the case of the dissenting minister can be like that of the exorcist of devils, he must perform at least one miracle. Let the dissenting minister show us a single miracle of his own performance, and we should probably no

langer forbid his preaching. Let him give us such a proof of his being called of God, then we might be very unwilling to disown his warrant to preach, even though the command, "Forbid him not" did not strictly refer to the practice of preaching. When he can give us such a proof of his call, we shall then be very likely, as much to blame as the disciples for forbidding him to preach: for argument's sake we will allow that we should be so, but, as will soon be perceived, we shall not be before. At all events, these words "Forbid him not" are not, strictly speaking, a direction to suffer a man to preach, and do not refer to a case of nomination by the people, and therefore is, on either account, not to the dissenter's purpose.

The next pseudo argument which I shall notice is taken from Acts i. 15—26. The people, say the dissenters, chose the two disciples to be presented to the Lord, as candidates for the vacancy in the apostolic college. (See verse 23.) Now, in the first place, it is not certain that the people did choose these two disciples: the assertion of the dissenters is without proof. It certainly is written in verse 23, "And they appointed two:" but this word "they," may mean the Apostles. I suppose that as St. Peter had (in verses 17, 21, 22,) spoken of himself and the Apostles, by using the word "us," that it has been thought by the dissenting teachers, that the word "they" must signify, not the Apostles, but some other persons. But it is to be noticed that the words "they appointed two," are not a part of St. Peter's speech, (which speech ended at verse 22,) but are the words of the writer of the book of the Acts,

St. Luke. St. Luke, in fact, informs us first, that one of the Apostles, in presence of the others, told the people that two men should be appointed, and then St. Luke adds, "*they*" appointed two. Now it is impossible to say from this passage, who they were that appointed them. Perhaps they altogether agreed to name two; perhaps the majority named them; perhaps the Apostles; perhaps the people. We have, looking at this passage by itself, just as much right to think it was the Apostles, as the dissenters have to say it was the people. Therefore it is unwarrantable, and misleading those who believe in them, to affirm positively, as they do, that the people nominated.

But the point principally to be noticed, is that these two men, Joseph and Matthias, were not chosen for their ability to preach. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that they were named by the people only; the people had not to judge of them as being able preachers of the word, and to choose them on that score; there was nothing of this kind in the case. The Holy Ghost was not given to Joseph and Matthias that we know of: the day of Pentecost certainly was not yet come. But the discourse of St. Peter fully sustains our position. By reading from verse 15 to verse 22 inclusively, it will be seen that the death of Judas, the traitor, having reduced the number of the Apostles from twelve to eleven, another man was to be chosen to fill his place. And does St. Peter intimate that the successor of Judas was to be appointed for his knowledge of the gospel? No such thing. His declaration is that one man out of the hundred and twenty as

assembled in St. Peter's audience must be appointed, who had accompanied the Apostles when Christ was on earth. And why was he to be ordained? St. Peter tells us (verse 22), that he might be, together with the Apostles, a witness of Christ's resurrection. The resurrection of Christ was continually, according to Scripture, one of the grand arguments which the Apostles urged in conversion of unbelievers. (Acts ii. 32 : iii. 15 : iv. 10 : v. 30 : x. 41 : xlii. 30 : 33, 34 : xvii. 31.) And it may be easily imagined how wise it must be to appoint ministers who actually saw Christ after he was risen : those men must be more satisfied of the fact than mere ear-witnesses. They were, so far, better qualified to contend for the truth, and, if need were, to bear it the testimony of martyrdom. However, certain it is—for it is so written—that the desire of St. Peter was, that a man from the number present should be ordained as a witness of the resurrection of Christ. Now we do not doubt for a moment, that all the congregation before St. Peter might know perfectly well who amongst them had seen Christ after his rising from the grave. Though we deny that the people can best appoint ministers of the word by judging of their qualifications, yet the persons addressed in this instance might all of them be excellent judges as to who present had been eye-witnesses of that event, which gives us hope of another existence. If the people were the electors in this case, all they were called upon to do was, to name two persons, not on account of their doctrines, to be their own pastors, but on another specific ground, which they were fully competent to determine. Besides which it may be

noted, that the whole transaction was under the immediate direction of the Apostles.

It ought perhaps to be mentioned that Mr. Towgood observes, that the whole body of the people were applied to on this occasion. Certainly St. Peter informed them that one of them was to be chosen; and as this was to be, it is hardly to be expected that he would have selected one, even himself, without giving them that information. Farther application than this is not apparent.

The next argument from Scripture is, the case of the seven deacons, to be found in Acts vi. What ever Mr. Towgood might think of the argument preceding, he appears quite certain, that this, derived from the election of the deacons is directly in point. Mr. White, his antagonist, objected to every lay christian having a right to choose his own pastor. Mr. Towgood answered, it is a right evidently founded on Scripture, and appeals to the appointment of the deacons. Mr. White had argued, (according to a garbled statement of Mr. Towgood,) that these deacons were only recommended by the people. "But" rejoined Mr. Towgood, "let the sacred story determine; 'Wherefore, brethren, look ye out amongst you seven men of honest report: and the saying pleased the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen and Philip' &c. Can words (he added) be more express?" We have here a great dissenting teacher maintaining, with a high hand, that this is a case of the people choosing their own pastors, and warranting an exercise of the same power in the people of the present times. Let the reader peruse attentively the whole truth of the matter as it stands in the first

the ~~verse~~ of Acts vii; and then let us consider the justness of this decision common to dissenters in general. In the first place, it is certainly true that the people were to look out, as it is translated, seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom. But then it is to be observed, first, that they had not to look out these persons in order to their being appointed ministers of the word. The seven deacons were not chosen by the people to be preachers at all. All of those whom they chose might possibly preach the word, as the people might possibly make choice, for the object in view, of those who had previously received authority to preach; but it was not for the purpose of preaching that the choice was now made by the people. It is clearly written that deacons were chosen to serve tables, and that too that the Apostles might be relieved of this duty, and devote themselves to preaching entirely. This is perhaps the greatest mistake which dissenters have made on this point. It is certainly quite sufficient of itself to show the fallacy of their argument, that the election of deacons was not an election of men for the office of preacher. Another error of the dissenters in this case, which is also fatal to their pretensions, is, that it was the people who had to appoint these seven men. It was not the people who appointed. They looked them out and chose them, but they named them to the Apostles for their appointment. The direction given to the people by the Apostles was, Look ye out seven men whom we may appoint over this business; and they set them before the Apostles, and the Apostles

laid their hands on them. And thirdly, as to the people's having to determine who amongst them were men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom; this is a perfectly inconclusive and irrelevant argument for the people in these days being allowed to determine for themselves who are able preachers of the word. It is not certain, in the first place, what is meant by the wisdom with which the deacons were to be replenished. It might not unlikely, considering the nature of the office for which the seven were designed, be the wisdom from above, described by St. James iii. 17, which "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." This kind of wisdom appears an excellent and appropriate qualification in the superintendants of the poor. And this character the people might judge; and it is very different from criticising doctrine. It has however been conjectured and argued, that the wisdom signified is the ability to preach the gospel—one of the gifts mentioned in 1 Cor. xii. 8—that possessed by the Evangelists recorded in Ephes. iv. 11. It certainly is not written in Acts vi. 3, that the seven were to be full of the Holy Ghost and of the word of wisdom; but we will give the dissenters, in imagination at least, the benefit of any doubt that may attend the question, and suppose that it was the ability to preach the will of God which they were to possess, signified by the word of wisdom and by the gift of the Evangelists. (1 Cor. xii. 8, and Eph. iv. 11.) And certainly we do observe that it is written of one or two of the seven, that they preached, and one of

them as an Evangelist. All might possibly do the same. But the brethren had no difficulty in turning their eyes towards men, among themselves, possessing a fulness of the Holy Ghost, and even this wisdom. The replete with the Holy Ghost and Evangelists, were individuals of a standing and recognized order. The fulness of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, in case of its being the wisdom of the evangelists, was indeed identical with professing tongues, and other extraordinary gifts by which the possessors were known, at least, among the brotherhood. The people who were desired to select the seven men for deacons were all under the direction and discipline of the Apostles, had no New Testament by which to form their judgment, but were to make a selection of men filled with powers of a miraculous description, by which they were distinguished, and by which in fact they were of honest report, or indeed "approved of God among them." After the direction given by the Apostles, the character of the seven deacons appeared delineated to them by an omnipotent hand, in a manner the most unequivocal, to which these times afford nothing parallel or comparable. It is impossible to argue, that because these people could make this choice under such circumstances, and without the difficulty of interpreting Scripture, that therefore it is to be inferred that the people of other days are competent, and are intended to decide by themselves, who are true interpreters of the Scripture, and when there are no miracles to guide them, and when many different modes of interpretation are prevalent. And, fourthly, so far in short from the selection of the seven deacons implying in the remotest

degree the appointment by the people of men to the
preachers to themselves, they had only, at the most,
to select from men who were full of the Holy Ghost
and wisdom; from men who had been previously
marked out by miraculous gifts, and appointed minist-
ters by God.

On four accounts, therefore, the election of the
seven deacons is not an argument, for the popular
appointment in these days of the ministers of the
word. 1. The people had to choose from ministers
already appointed by God. 2. The people addressed
by the Apostles might easily and certainly know
who were full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom; the
people cannot now easily and certainly tell who are
the true exponents of Scripture. 3. The Apostles
appointed the deacons—the people did not appoint
them. And 4. the election and appointment was
not to the ministry of the word at all. (Note M.)

Another argument advanced by the dissenters and
the only one of the kind which we have to examine,
is met with in Acts xv. It is known not to be
a precedent for electing ministers. The circum-
stances of the case are briefly these. Some false
teachers at Antioch had maintained that it was
necessary for the Christians to be circumcised. The
consequence was that Paul and Barnabas went to
Jerusalem to receive instruction from the church at
that place. The church returned an answer to the
Antiochians by letter; and the letter is written in
the name of the Apostles and elders and the brethren
of the people. The people here are partly
concerned, as of course is evident, but do not stand
alone: they are associated with the Apostles and

elders. This is, in fact, a beautiful example of the unity of the church. We see the ministers duly respected by the people. And the latter went forth in the name of the whole united body. Nevertheless it cannot be pretended that the people had the entire, or the principal management of the case in their own hands. The 2nd and 6th verses show that Paul and Barnabas did not go to Jerusalem to consult the people, but the Apostles and elders, and that the principal considerers of the matter were those very persons.

This case is so entirely distinct, as well as the two others which we have adduced, from the popular call of seceders to the ministry of the gospel, that a stranger to the argument of dissenters would not easily conjecture its real nature. Yet, as may be seen by a reference to the third section of Chap. VII, page 79, it is as follows: "True it is that we have no express mention of a case in which it is said that the people chose their own pastors; but, as the people are everywhere represented in the Acts of the Apostles, as in whole or in part the elective body in all other matters, they are of course to be considered as having the right to elect in this matter also. But can this be called an argument at all? Is this imaginable reasoning, that, because the people were allowed by Scripture to judge and choose in such cases as we have examined, that therefore they must be supposed to be allowed to judge and to choose in another case, of a totally different nature? Because it was competent to the people to know who amongst them had seen Christ after his resurrection, because they were qualified to nominate

a well-known description of persons to the service of tables, that therefore it was fit for them to judge who were proper to be ministers of the gospel, and ordain them accordingly. The nature of the argument is indeed briefly this: that *because* a man may be allowed an excellent judge in a case of law, he *therefore* must be acknowledged a very fit person to decide a difficulty in medicine. Ignorance itself can scarcely fail to perceive, on a little reflection, that one does not follow from the other; that the argument of dissenters drawn from the examples we have quoted in favour of the call of ministers to the office of preaching, is no argument whatever; and that neither their argument, nor the cases themselves, make any authority for the practice. As far then as we have gone at present, it appears that the people have chosen servants of tables, and other persons of certain descriptions, but that they have not nominated and appointed men to be pastors and teachers, and that there is nothing to induce the belief that they were esteemed by Christ as qualified and authorized to make such elections and appointments.

Nothing is more repugnant to reason than that intellectual despotism, by which one man is obliged to receive the opinions of another with the most perfect submission, without the smallest liberty of exercising the least discretion. When teachers and disciples differ, (I am speaking of the ministry of the church,) there would attach disgrace to the former if truth were not on their side. Still it is very possible that it be occasionally otherwise, and that a minister ought to have the best reason for his doc-

times; and before a hearer refuses to believe his instructor, it is his duty, if he cannot assent to his opinions, with the information he actually possesses, at least to converse and to dispute with him; and having desire only for the truth, coming to the question without passion or prejudice, to determine to believe his teacher or not, according to the force of his arguments. Bearing in mind that no man is to be denied any reasonable exercise of his judgment, proceed we now to scriptural arguments of another kind, but still such as are alleged in support of the dissenting practice of calling men to the ministry. The chief that present themselves are these: In Mark iv. 24, it is written, "Take heed what you hear." In Matthew vii. 15, "Beware of false prophets." In 1 John iv. 1, "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world." Again, an author in high esteem among dissenters teaches, that we as Christians are commanded in Scripture not to receive into our houses, nor to bid God speed to any one who brings false doctrines. And another of equal, or even superior reputation says, that we are to search the Scriptures whether the things declared unto us be so. There are several of the above quotations, of which it is said by one of the writers mentioned in chap. vii. section 3, (see page 79,) that from such injunctions as these the right of the people to choose their own ministers may be justly inferred; for without such a right it would be impossible to find any meaning in the command, nor any power in the people to obey it. And being most of them relied upon with the fullest

confidence as authority for the popular practice by the authorities cited, they shall come for first consideration.

I begin with the passage taken from Mr. James's work. "We are commanded," he writes, "not to receive into our houses, nor bid God speed to any one who brings false doctrine." This, in the first place, is not a text of Scripture at all: there is a sentence in the Bible in many parts like it, but nothing farther. The sentence most like that which Mr. James has placed before his readers, as if it were Scripture, is this: "If there come any unto you, and bring not *this* doctrine, receive him not into your house, nor bid him God speed." (2 John xi) I am far from charging Mr. James with the slightest intentional error. We are however, of course, concerned only to inquire into the meaning of the word of God; to which inquiry we proceed.

There were, it may be observed, at the time St. John wrote, false prophets in existence. The Apostle was writing to a private individual, a lady, mother probably of a juvenile family, partly with a view to guarding them against a false doctrine. This may be seen by a reference to the Epistle. In connexion with this warning, he speaks not explicitly of some truth or truths, under the name of the doctrine of Christ. All that we can perceive of its specification is probably its opposition to a doctrine mentioned in verse 7. But we must suppose that the illustrious woman to whom he addressed his Epistle had the means of comprehending his meaning well enough for his immediate purpose, however obscure it may appear to us, unacquainted with her

particular circumstances. And then he adds, "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house." It matters not to us, in this inquiry, what the doctrine was; it must have been one to which the elect lady sufficiently understood the Apostle's reference. We first complain against the dissenter in this instance, that the passage is so misrepresented, as if this command of the Apostle were literally that Christians in general are to judge of any doctrine, whether it were false or otherwise: whereas the commandment of the Apostle in this place is directed in words to only one particular case. Our second observation is, that the persons addressed were under the plain direction of their inspired teacher; and as they must have believed him to teach the will of God truly, they had only to take the doctrine on his word. The passage, indeed, alludes to no exercise whatever of private judgment of doctrine. The disciples were not left to their own opinions of the doctrine in contemplation, but were amenable to the decisions of apostolic authority. And where the private opinion of doctrines is excluded, there can be no relation to the people's making ministers for themselves, on account of approving their religious views and sentiments.

"Another of the passages which one author says incontestably prove the right of the people to choose their own ministers, and another which can bear no other signification, is that very famous and favourite commandment of, "Try the spirits whether they be of God."

It must be recollected that there were extra-

ordinary gifts of the Spirit in the days when this command was written. Some of the spiritual gifts then conferred have come down to our times; others, not; and those others are denominated extraordinary. A list of the extraordinary gifts is recorded in 1 Cor. xii. 8—10. Far the greater number of those operations there mentioned are certainly of the extraordinary kind,—most probably all of them. That which partakes, in the highest degree, of the appearance of an ordinary endowment is faith. But faith in that place cannot signify the common faith necessary to the Christian character; for it evidently was, according to the passage, a faith in possession of a portion of the believers only. It might indeed be easily shown to be extremely probable that every diversity of operation there enumerated was a manifestation of the Deity, with which our age has not been glorified. I think every man well learned in the Scriptures believes that these operations were all extraordinary. Now among them stands for one, the discerning of spirits. Supposing then that the command to try the spirits whether they be of God, were left totally undefined in Scripture, who can presume to say that it was not intended for such persons only as had the gift of discerning spirits; and if that gift is not bestowed in these days that the command is such as we are capable of obeying? Before it can be taken for granted that the injunction to try the spirits, simply so stated, is one to which we can yield obedience like the early churches, it must be proved that the gift of discerning spirits has descended to our times. And who can show that any men in these days have

that gift of discerning spirits which is mentioned in the Epistle to the Corinthians? But the truth is, that the commandment "Try the spirits," as it stands in Scripture, is not general. The false light in which it is set by dissenters is this: they give us the words of the commandment by themselves, as if it were a commandment according to Scripture, intended for all Christians and for all kinds of doctrines. They wrench the words from all they stand connected with in Scripture, and do not give us the sense which they bear there, but put another on them of their own. The real state of the case is as follows. The words are found in 1 John iv. 1, the verse runs thus: "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." The Apostle goes on directly after in these words, which will be recognized as a plain direction, expressly for the purpose of informing the people how they were to try the spirits which would arise among them: "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist." The Apostle, of course, could himself try the spirits, and he here instructs his disciples how they are to prove the spirit of antichrist: he gives them a rule for doing it. (Note that this again is a rule for a particular case, for the spirit of antichrist which was to appear at that time; and the people were not entrusted to the exercise of their own judgment, but required to comply with apostolic dictation.) On either of these views of

the same, no argument can be drawn from the commandment of St. John, in favour of the qualifications and authority of the people, in these days, to choose doctrines and teachers for themselves, solely according to their own opinions.

Another of the texts imagined to be inexplicable and impossible to be obeyed, if not authorizing the popular elections of ministers, is, "Beware of false prophets;" and one on which the reflections of one of the most eminent dissenting ministers are made, with the incorrectness and misunderstanding so prevalent in the whole fraternity. This text is to be found only in Matt. vii. 15, and is not independent of the context for its signification, as might be supposed by those who see it torn asunder from the gospel, as a distinct and general commandment. Our Saviour was preaching to the people certainly, (see Matt. vii. 15—28,) and he gave them, doubtless, the precept to beware of false prophets; but then, as is generally understood, he accompanied it with a rule by which the people were to discern them, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." (v. 16.) It is difficult for us to ascertain exactly the nature of the test here prescribed. It is most probably intended that the people should know the false prophets by their immorality.

It is, I say, generally, perhaps uniformly understood, that our Saviour, in those words, "Ye shall know them by their fruits," was informing the people of the means of detecting the impostures of the prophets. It is possible to put on the words, "Ye shall know them by their fruits," taken in connexion only with "Beware of false prophets," this construction,

You will know them immediately by the falseness of their doctrine; it will be so gross and palpable; that it cannot for an instant escape your notice. If this had been our Saviour's meaning, the people would have detected the attempts at imposture by a direct observation: but by reading the end of the verse, and what follows, it is evident that he signified they were not to know the falseness of the doctrines by intuition, but by inference. As you know that good fruit is not to be gathered from thistles, so you shall know that good doctrine is not to be expected from the prophets in whom you shall observe certain evil characteristics. This was the method by which they were to know that the prophets were false. It was an indirect one. Therefore there is thus strong reason for the general, if not hitherto universal opinion, that our Saviour did not signify the direct assertion, you will know these false preachers by their false preaching, but was furnishing them with a clue to their discovery.

From this view of the discourse of our Saviour we derive two arguments of a most convincing nature, that he did not signify you shall know these prophets by their opposition to the truth. One has been already involved in our foregoing statement. He was supplying a criterion of an inferential nature: but, besides this, since he was giving instructions for the detection of these men, it appears utterly unreasonable to imagine that he signified that the people should know them by their false doctrines, because such an interpretation will give our Saviour's words an air of absurdity. Christ designed to warn his disciples against certain propounders of heretical

nations: "We may thus paraphrase his words to: "There will appear among you, in the course of a short time, some preachers of false doctrine, and I am desirous of informing you how you may distinguish these impostors. The mode of doing it is this: by observing their false doctrine." This is a "collocutio in sensu." In the first part of the sentence it is supposed that the people could not perceive the falseness of the doctrine without instruction; and in the second it is assumed that they have every necessary qualification.

But not only is there satisfactory evidence that our Saviour did not signify, you shall know them by their doctrines, but much positive ground for asserting, that by their fruits he meant their immoral conduct.

It is known that miracles were a test, and not the only one. They were not always convincing, for the people imagined that they might be performed by Beelzebub; nor were all those prophets good men who received miraculous powers. (Matt. vii. 22, 23.) Now if immorality were a means of proving the want of authenticity in the false prophets, certainly it was an intelligible test: so far it appears not unreasonable. Also to understand our Saviour to signify with the fruits, in this place, would not be a solitary instance of the interpretation. It is written, "Bring forth fruit meet for repentance," and "Bring forth fruit with patience," and, "Bear much fruit." (The signification is in itself allowable. Besides which, the false prophets alluded to in several passages of Scripture are described as immoral men. (Acts xx. 29 & 31; Titus vi. 3-5; 2 Pet. ii. 3, 10.) And that our Saviour

did really intend their misconduct, is easily collected from what he added concerning them in one of the following verses. He said, many prophets in his name would perish at the last judgment for *working iniquity*. It is obvious to perceive, by reading the whole passage, that though our translators have made a new paragraph at verse 21, the most reasonable mode of connecting the whole, is by an allusion, in the iniquity of the prophets, to the fruits of the impostors of whom he had been warning the people.

We have then already seen that it was not by their doctrine that the people were to prove the false prophets against whom they had been cautioned, but by observing their immorality. This is sufficient to show that the people were not by our Saviour's caution authorized to make ministers, in consequence of the approbation of their doctrines.

But let us now for a moment suppose—to give our opponents all the benefit of their argument—that it was possible or probable that our Saviour taught the people to detect the prophets by observation of doctrine.

Could it not be imagined very reasonably, that the people might and did know what Christ and the Apostles had taught them; and that if they heard taught from any man contrary to what they had received from them, they might know he was a setter forth of falsehood? And might they not obey Christ's commandment of bewareing of such a man by refusing to hear him afterwards? Might this not be an act of obedience to the commandment, without calling men to the ministry? And might it not be prudent to warn men against receiving any doctrine

themselves teachers, even *christian* teachers. I notice, in direct opposition to the assertion of the dissenter, that it is quite impossible that the right of the people to choose their own ministers is to be inferred from the words spoken by Christ, "Beware of false prophets."

Thus we have in various ways abundantly proved that the words, "Beware of false prophets," are to be understood without their implying any right in the people of making men into ministers.

The last of these sentences from Scripture of which it has been said, by high dissenting authority, that they neither admit explanation nor obedience, unless they imply the right of the people to ordain ministers, is, "Take heed what you hear." (St. Mark iv. 24.) The words in another Gospel, giving an account of the same sermon of our Saviour's, are, "Take heed how you hear." (Luke viii. 18.)

The church says to the people, "Take heed what you hear;" and she calls on the dissenting congregations to take heed what *they* read and hear. She would desire them to hear both sides of the question between churchmen and dissenters, and particularly to hear both parties in their own words. Yet it is certain that, by giving that advice, she does not intend that they are to make ministers. And so far are the words from being unintelligible, or the precept contained in them impracticable, without conferring the right of ordination, that they were spoken originally like the last text to Jews; and the dissenting interpretation is liable to the same charge of lamentable absurdity.

Thus we have examined and found void of validity

all these dissenting authorities which have been pronounced incapable of any adverse interpretation.

Another argument, on which much stress is laid, yet remains. The author of that book which was written to redeem Nonconformity from the disadvantages of fugitive controversy, says, "We are to search the Scriptures whether the things declared unto us be so." (See Chap. VII. § 3.)

This pretext for the popular claim under consideration, brings to our recollection a subject of vital importance, which may be pronounced one of the greatest blessings that education and the arts have conferred upon mankind, but which, like other blessings, may be and has been much abused—the reading of the Scriptures. It has been indeed abused; since the Reformation in this country, by the millions who have formed the most discordant opinions, from the perusal of the Scriptures, almost entirely on their own authority. It affords me pleasure, however, to reflect, that the advantages of reading Scripture, which the church contemplates for her members, are numerous and great. It serves, I repeat, to the increase of divine knowledge, by the assistance of the written and oral instruction of a ministry; it revives impressions of divine truth which required renewal; it tends to the correction of error, and to the inspiration of comfort; and, what deserves particularly in this place to be most emphatically reiterated, it is of use in examining, in verifying the doctrines of the ministry. It is at all times satisfactory, if possible, to discover the Scripture, by our own researches, to be in accordance with the lessons of the pulpit: but without the means

of examining into the authority of a doctrine, it is not impossible that the errors of the church in former ages might recur. It is some security for the orthodoxy of the pastor. His appeal is to the law and the testimony, and the people ought to be enabled to satisfy themselves, that he draws from the wells of salvation the water of life in its purity. They ought to be able to see that things are as he states them to be; and if they appear, as they easily may, to be otherwise, it is their right to call on the minister for explanation of what is difficult, the elucidation of the abstruse, and reconciliation of what has the appearance of disagreement. This is a most important privilege of the people. And it must now be observed again, as appropriate to the argument under review, that the comparison of the doctrines of the ministry with the word of God, is the primary and evident design of that command and that commendation in Scripture, upon which the duty of reading the Scripture for general purposes is ordinarily founded;—I mean, “Search the Scriptures;” and the text which Mr. Conder has converted to the support of the question before us, “These were more noble than those of Thessalonica, for they searched the Scriptures daily whether the things declared unto them were so.” (Acts xvii. 10, 11.) That these passages apply in their spirit and essence to the reader of all nations and ages, there can be no doubt: but neither they nor experience authorizes the expectation, that any reader of the Bible may form his own notions of doctrine without “some man to guide” him. The command indeed of searching the Scriptures, even for the purpose

designed by Christ, is not so easily obeyed by the Gentiles, as by those to whom he spoke. The Jews were commanded to search a volume, the Old Testament, the original language of which was, under some variations, their native tongue, and in the interpretation of which they were, in a manner, educated. But that purpose was certainly the verification of his doctrine, the observation of the correspondence of his attributes with the prophetic character. It was evidently a similar object which the Bereans had in view in those researches for which they had received so high an eulogium. But the reference to the Bible, for comparison of the minister's doctrine with its sacred contents, is a widely different and distinct act from the creation of a ministry. And for other reasons besides this, in the case of the commandment to search the Scriptures, it is impossible for any intelligent person to conceive for a moment that it involved the ordaining power. It was given at a time when Christ and those whom he appointed were the sole ministers, and was given likewise to the Jews.

The arguments, then, advanced by the dissenters from the Scripture, in support of the popular right of electing, appointing, and ordaining ministers, not only fail under them, but exhibit the rash precipitancy of their judgment, and their incapacity for teaching others. It will be for us next to inquire, whether the Scripture does not afford us precedent of the appointment of ministers by other ministers previously ordained,—a mode of appointment which, we saw in our last chapter, is the most favourable to

the preservation of truth in human opinions, and which is followed in our own establishment.

The ministers of Christ were, in the first instance, according to Scripture, either appointed by himself or by the Holy Spirit in some miraculous manner. God did not probably appoint *all* men to the ministry of the word in either of these ways, long before the year 60 or 70 after the nativity. St. Paul was called by Christ himself from heaven. But about the year 40, we find St. Paul, and with him St. Barnabas, who was probably like St. Paul, chosen as a prophet and teacher at the first by means of miraculous agency; travelling in company for about two years over a large tract of country. The object of their peregrinations was the diffusion of the gospel. The fact which it concerns us most particularly to notice in this place is, that they ordained elders, ministers, or overseers, in every church: it appears in the 14th chapter of the book of the Acts. I believe this is the only place where it is written that Paul and Barnabas, or any of the Apostles, at or about that time, ordained elders in the churches. But if there had been only this example in the whole of Scripture; here is at once more than the dissenters can show on their side. Here are not the people making and ordaining elders, but the Apostles; and if this had been a *simple* example, it would alone have established our point. Let it be imagined with what exultation and defiance the dissenters would obtrude upon our confusion *one* case, if they could find it in Scripture, of an ordination by the people. Would they not triumphantly appeal to it as authority for their practice, and could we gainsay so powerful an

argument? In this manner may they judge, if in no other, of the sufficiency of one unopposed precedent for ourselves. But the example is complex. It involves "*every*" church.

But this is far from all our authority. I have no immediate recollection of any other case of ordination by men of the apostolic order being mentioned, till we come down ten or fifteen years nearer the fall of Jerusalem. We find the Apostle Paul then giving the power of making or ordaining presbyters, or elders, or ministers, to other persons. The first example which I shall adduce, is that of Titus. Titus was probably a convert of St. Paul's. About the year A.D. 64, he receives from St. Paul an Epistle, that which stands in the canon. He had laboured with St. Paul in the ministry, and was highly approved by him. And about the date of this letter, St. Paul informs us, for this cause he had left Titus in Crete, that he should set in order the things which were wanting, and ordain elders in every city as he had appointed him. (See the Epistle of St. Paul to Titus, chap. i. 5.) Nothing need be plainer than this. Crete was an island abounding in cities, in every one of which, where Christianity was professed, Titus received authority from St. Paul to ordain ministers. And if any confirmation were wanted of Titus's commission to ordain elders, the description which St. Paul immediately subjoins of the qualifications of a bishop, or, as the dissenters might not improperly in this instance contend, of a presbyter or elder, adds great strength to the argument. St. Paul informs him the kind of character which a pastor ought to possess; and as we must naturally suppose,

and as the connexion of the sixth with the fifth verse evidently indicates, for his guidance in the election of candidates for the ministry; and, amongst other things, it was prescribed, that he must be a man "holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convince the gainsayers." (See verses 6—9.)

Another case of nearly equal weight presents itself in the Epistles of St. Paul to Timothy. Timothy had been a companion of St. Paul on several occasions. He had been educated in a knowledge of the Old Testament, and is generally believed to have been a convert of that Apostle's. His name is associated with St. Paul's in several of his Epistles. About the year A.D. 64, he had been left by him in the city of Ephesus, where there was a christian church with many elders. While Timothy probably was residing among the Ephesians, he receives from St. Paul one or both of the two Epistles which form a portion of the New Testament. In neither of these is Timothy expressly commissioned to ordain elders, by so plain a direction as that given by St. Paul to Titus, during his residence in Crete, and which we have already noticed; but there are evident indications of his being invested with such authority, almost as convincing as a positive assertion of the fact. For instance, St. Paul informs Timothy of the proper characteristics of a bishop or a pastor, in nearly the same terms as those in which he conveyed the same kind of intelligence to Titus. And it can hardly be supposed but that the information was given him for the same purpose as to Titus,

which certainly was to guide him in the ordination of candidates to the pastoral office. In confirmation of this opinion, it may be observed that Timothy, according to the Epistles, was empowered to superintend the ministrations of the elders who were already appointed. It is written in one place, "I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine." (1 Tim. i. 3.) In 1 Tim. v. 19, it is written to him again, "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses." These passages must be said to be favourable to the presumption that Timothy had the power to ordain, rather than opposed to it. Two other passages are more to the purpose. One occurs in 2 Tim. ii. 2: "The things that thou hast heard of me, among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also;" and another in 1 Tim. v. 22, is thus expressed, "Lay hands suddenly on no man." It is most probable that this precept to lay hands suddenly on no man, referred to ordination. Ordination was performed by the imposition of hands. There are, I believe, only four other significations of the phrase in Scripture. Hands were imposed in the communication of the gift of the Holy Ghost, in the cure of diseases, in bestowing a blessing, (Mark x. 16,) and in assaults on the person; but we have reasons for thinking that Timothy was not endowed with miraculous powers and gifts. This precludes the application of two of the interpretations to him: the case of assault, of course, is inadmissible. The laying on of hands, intended as an external mark of benediction, is the

on the objections of dissenters stated in Chap. VII. § 2, pp. 71—78.

It is insinuated in several of their works, and particularly in the standard volume on Nonconformity, as quoted in the pages referred to, that the mode of appointment to the ministry followed by the Apostles, is adopted from the Jewish synagogue. There is some plausibility in this statement; because there is some resemblance between the modes of appointment pursued. But if by this is meant to be cast any reflection on the apostolic practice, as recorded in the word of God, prejudicial to the institution of a ministry as there prescribed, what does it amount to but a species of blasphemy? a reflection calculated and intended to bring the Scripture into contempt? It might seem good to God that appointments to the ministry should be made in a way which was somewhat similar under the Christian dispensation to that followed by the Jews,—particularly if the insurance of qualified persons were an object attainable in any degree by the similitude; but it is not necessary to inquire into the causes of the *resemblance*,—nor whether it was incidental or designed. The New Testament clearly exhibits the plan pursued by the Apostles; and to that we are to conform with the most implicit submission. It is to be hoped that dissenters will neither attempt to set aside, nor be disposed to disobey the Scripture, when they find it makes against them.

The second observation we have to make, which is of greater importance, arises from a supposed infringement on natural privileges, and inconsistency with divine principles,—involved in the admission to

the ministry exclusively by the ordained minister : and this brings us to a very critical point of our inquiry. Under the impression of every man's unlimited right of interpreting the Scripture for himself, of truth being alone the qualification of every minister, and of ordination being only a decent sanction of the proceedings of a congregation, it has been imagined that the admission to the ministry, as in the Church of England, is a "human" and "political" mode of appointment, which constitutes a new and unscriptural source of authority. The lucubrations of dissent on this subject are sufficiently stated in Chap. VII. § 2. This is one instance, out of many, which the narrow limits of a moderately sized volume do not permit me to expose, of schismatical hallucination. An answer has already been given, in part, to the allegation that truth is the only necessary warrant of the preacher, (see Chap. VIII. § 1) ; and that answer must be well remembered at the present moment to understand our subject fully. Now, it may be further answered, that the idea of a "political" right, which, from some strange fatality, seems continually to haunt the imagination of the dissenter, is the base coinage of mere illusion ; there is nothing whatever "political," in a worldly point of view, in the ordination of ministers by persons already invested with the ministerial functions. Neither is it pretended (God forbid) that the examination of candidates for holy orders, and the imposition of hands by the bishop, is the *source* of the preacher's authority :—this idea is another example of the extreme infelicity of dissenting genius. These charges thus brought against the church by the philosophy,

of the sects, are evident proofs that those who urge them sincerely and conscientiously, do not understand the nature of ordination, nor the theory of the church on the subject. The *source* of a minister's authority, we trust we know it better than any separatist whatever, is divine; his qualifications are truth and piety. The necessary examination and the ordination of the previous minister, are only *tests* and *evidences* of his possessing those qualifications which are the source of authority, (see Chap. VIII. § 1, towards the beginning,) and are means of excluding those who make false pretences to such qualifications. They are evidences to the people and to the ministers themselves, of their fitness,—they are the *outward call* to the ministry,—the best that we can possess in lieu of miraculous testimony. Some persons must judge what is truth, and reason informs us that, in principle, the best judges are to be those who have been admitted into the ministry already by competent examiners; and Scripture proposes and authorizes, as we have seen, the principle in practice, and even in theory. So presumptuous, not to say impious, is that conclusion, which we have recorded on a former page, (76), that “the usurpation of the sacred office by incompetent persons, is an evil which the interposition of ecclesiastical restrictions is but ill adapted to mitigate.”

The observations of Mr. Conder which, to avoid mutilation, I transferred to my pages, respecting ordination in the church, *not admitting* to the pasto-

nal office because of the *title prerequisite*; and respecting ordination being a *qualification*, because the church thinks proper to bless her new ministers under that form of words, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost;" and, farther, respecting the great diversity of doctrine in these days, making it more necessary for every private Christian to choose his own scriptural instructor, than in the times of the Apostles, when this is, in fact, an argument which makes episcopal ordination the more necessary; are, I hope, too evidently contrary to truth and reason to render an exposure desirable.

It may be advisable just to observe, that a *title* means a provision of a cure of souls, which the bishops require before they consent to ordain a candidate for orders,—a provision which, for good reasons, they deem necessary.

It is now incumbent upon me to offer a few additional strictures on those extracts from the work upon Protestant Nonconformity which occur in Chap. VII. § 2. We have asserted that the author, in those extracts, has affirmed the opinion of the all-sufficiency of the knowledge of the truth, as authority to preach the gospel. But it is possible that it might not be, after all, that gentleman's real sentiments; considering that he has implied in one part of them, that a minister's labours should be attended with success as one of his credentials, and in two others, that he ought to possess a moral competency. I must think, however, that the words of this writer, oc-

cutting in three or four other passages which I have extracted from his volume, and which, I imagine, the least attentive reader may notice for himself, justify my accusation of his making the knowledge of the truth an *authority* to preach; and of his regarding that moral competency and success as a warrant not absolutely necessary. Indeed it is not very easy to conceive how *past success* in ministering the word, can be made to apply in our case, which is one for the *creation* of a ministry. But in order to preclude the least semblance of fair objection on his part, it will be liberal, if not just, to give him every advantage that can possibly accrue from laxity of expression; and imagine, that he signified that *all the three "credentials"* mentioned, were indispensable and *sufficient*. In addition, therefore, to undertaking to disprove that merely the knowledge of the truth is a sufficient warranty, our argument must extend over a wider range, and take in the two other credentials, and prove the insufficiency of the triple combination. To this point we will direct our immediate attention.

To the highest moral character, *as a warranty*, I would offer no further objection, than that it appears not to be necessary and indispensable. (See Matt. xxiii. 2, 3, &c.) Our question lies rather with the success of the ministerial labours. It may appear at first sight, to those who have been accustomed to think with the author of the work on Protestant Nonconformity, that it is reasonable, as he contends it is, that if a man possesses a moral competency, and knows the truth, and propagates it among his hearers,—that he must be on these accounts war-

wanted to preach: it seems as if every end and object were secured. And what more, it may be asked, can be desired? And where can be any fallacy in this view of the subject? There is indeed the greatest fallacy in it. The answer is, in short, that it is supposing already done, the very thing which is to be done. Our point is the *creation* of a ministry of the word; and the question concerning it is this: to discover the means to be used in order to ensure only true preachers, and to exclude those which are false. And the same arguments from reason and Scripture hold against the three assumed credentials of the preacher, as against the mere knowledge of the truth considered by itself.

In the first place, the three are of no use whatever as a rule of practice. The very same kind of arguments are applicable here as we advanced in pp. 95—102. As a rule of practice, since truth is undefined, they leave preachers and the people the liberty to call any doctrines by the name of truth which gratify them; and thus a door is open for any diversities of opinion as far as the practice is concerned, while truth is a generally indefinite object.

In the next place, they are unsound in theory for both ministers and people, on the same grounds which we have urged against the mere knowledge of the truth separately. The case of the minister has been already made out in great measure, from reason and Scripture, in pp. 95—102. Even if he preaches and propagates the truth in all its perfection, he is not warranted in reason to be doing this with an uncertainty of doing it. All the certainty practicable is necessary to make his war-

ranty complete. Without a certainty of this kind, it must be, while he is preaching the truth and spreading it among his hearers, doubtful to him whether he is preaching the truth or not. And it is perfectly impossible for a man who is doubtful, (and according to the dissenting principle he may be extremely doubtful)—it is perfectly impossible for a man who is doubtful in a great degree whether he is preaching the truth, to be impressed with those convictions which ought to influence his mind in a service intended for divine. There ought to be in his mind an assurance, and the best possible assurance, that he is serving God truly. And that assurance cannot exist, if he is doubtful that he preaches the truth. There is, therefore, very plainly, in theory, something more required as a warranty to preach than the propagation of truth—that is, a moral certainty that we are propagating it.

So again of the people: even if they imbibe the truth, they ought, as a warranty to receive it when it is set before them as truth, to be certified that it is the will of God, in order to be rationally assured, as responsible agents, that they are really doing Him honour and service. (See also pp. 98—105.)

Certificates on both sides therefore, are, according to the arguments which we have seen, necessary in theory, and, what is of greater importance, in practice; and the ceremonies of examination and ordination, by previously ordained ministers, as we have just shown, are the external evidences according with this theory and the practice of the wisdom which dictated the word of truth.

SECTION IV.

The apostolic Fathers favourable not to the creation of ministers by the people ; but to that mode of appointing to the ministry followed in the Church of England, viz. by persons previously ordained.

Passing over the two compositions ascribed to Hermas and Barnabas, as the genuineness of the Epistle imputed to the latter is much disputed, and neither of them, though both in our favour, contains any thing of very material importance to our question, we shall confine our attention to the Epistles of Polycarp, Ignatius, and Clemens Romanus ; extracting from the second named author such passages as are well authenticated.

One general observation which applies to the epistles of all these patriarchs of the church, claims our first consideration. They enjoin on the people submission and obedience to their ministers agreeably to that commandment of Scripture, "Obey those that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves," (Heb. xiii. 17,) and others of a similar nature. Polycarp, in the only epistle of his extant, has this injunction, "Be subject to your presbyters and deacons, as to God and Christ." The first epistle of Clemens Romanus contains one or two commands of submission to the same authorities. But in the number and strictness of his injunctions to this effect, Ignatius exceeds them both. There are six epistles in existence, reputed to have proceeded from his pen. They have not been transmitted through the channel of ages without contracting numerous

impurities. The vitiated parts, however, have been sufficiently ascertained; and in those which are well authenticated, occur several such passages as follow: "Be subject to your bishop as to the Lord." (Epist. to Trall.) "Let no man perform any act pertaining to the church, independently of the bishop." (Epist. to Smyrn.) "As the Son does nothing without the Father, so do ye nothing without the bishop." (Epist. to Magn.) These precepts illustrate a few portions of the epistles, which, considered apart from them, might appear of somewhat ambiguous interpretation.

We will proceed now to the examination of the epistles of each author separately.

The single epistle of Polycarp bears but slightly on our question. There is indeed one passage which might appear, without some thought, to be adverse to our views of it. The author expresses his deep regret, that Valens, a presbyter of the church to which he writes, has disgraced himself by some misconduct, and, as it is often concluded, was ejected from the ministry. He prays that God may grant him repentance, and he advises the church to call or restore him to his office. This interpretation is making every concession to our adversaries. It is, indeed, uncertain that Valens was deprived at all; and there is therefore room to doubt whether his recal or restoration signifies more than a re-instatement in the esteem of the church after a due confession of his guilt, and a satisfactory demonstration of repentance. And whatever disadvantage to our argument might be supposed to arise from the power which the church in general appeared to possess of *recalling* the rejected presbyter, it is impossible to contend for the exact

propriety of the expression, as the original words of Polycarp have perished in the wreck of antiquity, and we have to depend in this place on a translation of, it appears, no very faithful character. But it may be maintained that this recal (allowing the act of the church to be thus denominated) does not imply private judgment of doctrine; for it appears very evidently, that it was not for heresy that Valens was deprived, if deprived at all. The cause of his degradation was evidently, according to the context, immorality of some kind, most probably covetousness. Cave gives the following translation: "I am exceedingly troubled for Valens, who was sometime ordained a presbyter among you, that he so little understands the place wherein he was set. I therefore warn you, that you abstain from covetousness, and that ye be chaste, and keep yourselves from every evil work. But he that in these things cannot govern himself, how shall he preach it to another?" &c. Here was a case then perfectly distinct from the difficulties and intricacies of heresy; and in which, even the unlearned body of the church might easily form a reasonable and pious judgment. In addition to this, it may be observed, secondly, that it cannot be supposed that this direction of recalling Valens was given to the church, independent of its ministers, whom the people, as we have seen from Ignatius and Clemens, and even Polycarp himself, were commanded to obey. It is rather to be believed, that the ministers, without whom no ecclesiastical act was to be performed, were intended to take the lead in restoring the degraded member of the church, and the people to comply with their

judicious injunctions. The people were to come with their ministers, probably in the same manner as the unity of the church was exhibited at Jerusalem in their joint rescript on circumcision. (Acts. xii. 23.)

The epistle of Polycarp therefore cannot be interpreted to acknowledge in the people the supreme power in the private judgment of doctrines. On the contrary, it teaches rather that they are dependent on the ministers for instruction, and are to submit themselves to their guidance. This is, in some degree, an argument that the people did not appoint ministers from approbation, nor reject candidates for the ministry on disapproval of their doctrines; inasmuch as there can be no subjection of the mind to the doctrines of another, if we are to receive only what we should have previously approved; and to refuse what in our private opinions we have been disposed to condemn. But if the people were at liberty to make a rule of their own judgment, and reject any applicant for ordination whom they might disapprove, there appears no reason against their enjoying the same liberty, in hearing the doctrines of a minister. If their own approbation or disapprobation is the rule, it is the same thing whether the utterer of the doctrine is a minister or not. If I have a right to depend on my own private judgment of doctrines, of course my right extends to the judgment of them abstractedly from the consideration of the persons by whom they are delivered. And therefore they who, generally speaking, may be ruled by their private judgment, and reject a candidate for the ministry whom they disapprove, may, by a natural consequence, if this is sound principle, reject a minister on

the same. But this rejection of a minister, Polycarp's direction of submitting to presbyters does not in principle allow. Therefore the premised supposition is false, that it is conceded to men to make ministers on approbation of doctrines.

Pass we now to the epistles of Ignatius. There are two or three passages in them which, at the first glance, may appear to convey that liberty of judging with respect to doctrines, which is exercised in the popular appointment of ministers: but a closer inspection destroys the illusion. For instance, Ignatius applauds the Ephesians, because it had come to his knowledge, that when certain propagators of false doctrine had passed through Ephesus, they had refused to hear them, and had not suffered their tares to be scattered among the wheat which had been sown within its walls. The Smyrneans also he commends for receiving three deacons, Philo, Gaius, and Agathopos. These appear the only two passages in the genuine remains of Ignatius, that bear the remotest resemblance to the creation of preachers by the people. Now with respect to the latter of these, evidence is wanting that Philo, Gaius, and Agathopos were ordained deacons at Smyrna. The sentence is to this effect:—It was a laudable action on your part to receive, as deacons of Christ, Philo and Gaius and Agathopos, who have been followers of me agreeably to the word of God. These men were, for any thing which appears in the epistle, deacons sent to Smyrna from some other church. Intercourse between churches was not uncommonly maintained at the time by missions of that nature. They had however, more probably been recommended to the Smyrneans by

Ignatius himself. These persons, according to the epistle to the Philadelphians, had accompanied him from the East, Philo from Cilicia, and Gaius and Agathopos from his own see; and one of them, Philo, is styled a deacon in that epistle. It seems indeed that they appeared at Smyrna in the character of deacons, and that the Smyrnæans did well in giving them a favourable reception, a welcome, and refreshment on their journey. They returned thanks to the Lord for being relieved by them in the most liberal manner. And whatever were the real circumstances of the case, certain it is that Ignatius commanded the Smyrnæans, as he did the Trallians, to do nothing without their bishop and presbyters. It was an act, in all probability, performed with the concurrence of their authorities, and not the judgment of doctrine.

The case of the Ephesians, the second quoted, who refused to receive the doctrines of the itinerant prophets, is an evidence rather of their obedience and respect to their own teachers, than of any act of independent judgment. It is very possible, indeed reasonable, to conceive that their ministers had cautioned them against these disseminators of noxious seed, and that they had attended to their admonitions. This supposition would give a very intelligible construction to the passage. The passage therefore is not a positive argument for the exercise of private judgment, and in fact there is ground in the epistle for believing that we have given the true explanation of the circumstance. Ignatius acquaints us that Onesimus, the Ephesian bishop, had informed him that his church was walking in all respects according

to the truth, and that there existed among them no heresy.

These I pronounce to be, in my own opinion, the passages in Ignatius's epistles most apparently unfavourable to the cause which I advocate. The quotation of Towgood from the epistle to the Philadelphians respecting the ordination by the church of a bishop, or a deacon, as is probably the better reading, is really beside the question. It was the act of the church, to be believed a concurrence of the people with the ministers, and not in creating a minister of the word, but in selecting some existing minister for a messenger to a distant ecclesiastical establishment.

So much for the passages which wear the most unkindly aspect. A few of another complexion remain, which in some degree at least represent Ignatius as adverse to the independent ordination of ministers of the word. He has not certainly declared that presbyters and deacons are to be appointed by previous ministers, but he has afforded us arguments more auspicious to that supposition, than to the mode of popular appointment.

The inferences to be drawn from the doctrine of submission to bishops and presbyters, in opposition to the creation of ministers by the people, are, as we argued with reference to the passage in the epistle of Polycarp, extremely strong and satisfactory. Such inferences are abundantly deducible from the epistles of Ignatius, as the doctrine of submission can scarcely be inculcated with more strictness and force than in those compositions.

Add to this, as far as the appointment of bishops,

in any other than the popular method, is an argument for a similar mode of appointing the presbytery, there are two passages which carry considerable weight.

One occurs in the epistle to the Magnesians, and the other in that to the Ephesians. It appears that the believers at Magnesia were dissatisfied with their bishop on account of his *youth*. Upon which Ignatius takes occasion to admonish them, that they ought not to make his age an argument for disrespect towards him, but to obey him notwithstanding, agreeably to the wisdom of the divine appointment. And one persuasive he employs, is the suggestion, that by this contempt they not only despise him whom they have seen, but him also whom they have not seen; for that the bishop had not received his preferment from man, but God. I think it fairly deducible from this extract, that the Christians of Magnesia had not ordained their bishop on their own judgment, and that there is another mode of ordination of divine institution. For, first, had the Magnesians chosen a young man for their bishop, it is hard to conceive, that they could afterwards have made his *youth* an objection to his continuing in office. It might also have been said, that he did receive his appointment from man. This, however, is denied; and that there is a method of appointing to the highest order of the ministry, independent of the people, by divine authority, Scripture, as we shall see in our chapter on prelacy, testifies in the cases of Titus and Timothy; and to this it must be supposed that Ignatius refers, when he speaks of the bishop receiving his promotion from God, as we have

no other source of information respecting the divine decrees. I think, secondly, that the passage which has been quoted from this epistle to the Magnesians, contains evidence of the people not properly possessing the power of displacing their bishop: for if they were competent to his ejection, it would appear that Ignatius had no authority for requiring them, as he did, to submit to his ministry. And if the people were not entitled to remove the bishop, it may be presumed that they did not instal him.

Our second passage was addressed to the Ephesians: "Whomsoever the master of the family sends into his own household, it behoves us to receive, as the person himself by whom he is sent." This is certainly predicated more expressly of bishops than of any other order of ministry. It nevertheless appears very capable of a more general application; and seems to indicate that ministers are appointed by the Lord of the household, in his own mode, which we of course must seek in the Scriptures.

And on the authority of these two extracts, and the inferential argument from the most rigorous doctrines of popular submission to ministers, it may be affirmed that Ignatius appears, rather than otherwise, to discountenance the nomination to the ministry, on the people's admission of their orthodox pretensions.

But we now come to our third authority, Clemens Romanus, whose sentiments are so express and apposite, that they would have been, even in the absence of any favourable appearances in the works of contemporary writers, alone sufficient to establish our position. He not only in the early part of his

epistle commends the former submission of the Corinthians to their ministers, and in chap. xiii. relates the fact, recorded on inspired authority, that the Apostles appointed overseers, or presbyters, or bishops, and deacons; but in chap. xiv. he declares the motive of the apostolic appointments, their exclusiveness, and the intended future operation of their principle. His words are, "And the Apostles, knowing that contentions would arise touching the oversight of the church, appointed the ministers already named, that is, overseers and deacons, and afterwards, or in their time, prescribed a course or succession, that on their decease other approved men might take their office. Therefore we ought not (says he) to reject the ministers who have been appointed by *them*, (i. e. the Apostles,) or in their time or subsequently by other illustrious or learned characters." These illustrious or learned characters were of course those approved men just spoken of, whom they had appointed to succeed them, of whom Timothy and Titus were doubtless two. The point for observation most particularly is, that the ministers, presbyters, and deacons were appointed by the Apostles in the first instance, and afterwards by illustrious men, ordained by the Apostles as their successors in office.

APPENDIX I. to § 2—4.

For the sake of distinctness we will, in this place, briefly state the conclusion to be drawn from the last three sections, which is this: that the appointment to the ministry by previous ministers, and not by the

people, is agreeable to reason, Scripture, and the apostolic fathers; the three great authorities mentioned and appreciated in our Chapter II.

APPENDIX II.

It is a deviation from the direct course prescribed in this inquiry, to examine works of modern writers in favour of, or in opposition to, the institution of our church, but one of the most celebrated advocates of the independent system, has made so triumphant an appeal to the writings of an eminent episcopalian, and to those parts of them which bear immediately on the organization of the primitive church, that it may be advisable briefly to notice the reference. "If it were at all necessary (says the dissenter alluded to,) to proceed beyond the word of God, we could with unhesitating confidence refer to the facts of ecclesiastical history, as furnishing ample proof, that the mode of the popular election of bishops prevailed in the early ages of the Christian History. If the reviewer or any other episcopalian entertains any doubt on this subject, they may consult the first and second chapters of the Fourth Book of Bingham's *Antiquities of the Christian Church*. They must, if they please, dispose of that very learned authority, before they can expect us to relinquish so natural, useful, and ancient a right. We can defend it from Scripture, and their own most established authorities." (James' Diss. and Ch. p. 54, and note.)

It is here asserted that Bingham, the author of *"The Antiquities of the Christian Church,"* has maintained the opinion that bishops were eligible by the people in the first century. And the assertion is

intended by our dissenting authority, as an evidence that Bingham is favourable to the practice of nominating and appointing presbyters by the people in the present day. This citation of the learned antiquarian involves such a confusion of error on the part of the dissenter, as almost defies extrication and correction in that short compass to which I labour to confine myself.

In order to understand the merits of this part of our subject, the reader ought to be well aware, 1st, (as stated in Chap. VII. § 5,) that the dissenters hold that there are to be, according to Scripture, only two orders of ministers in the church—presbyters and deacons: and that we maintain there should be three—bishops, presbyters, and deacons; the dissenters arguing that bishops and presbyters meant the same persons in Scripture; and accordingly agreeing with Mr. James, in calling a bishop a presbyter, and a presbyter a bishop. And, 2nd, that the point contended for and proved against dissenters in this and our two preceding sections is, that the people ought not to ordain *presbyters*. We have not been mainly arguing that the people ought not to elect bishops in our sense of the word; our great point has been only this: that the people are not to ordain those ministers, whom we, of the church, denominate *presbyters*. And as we understand the two orders of ministry, there is a difference in principle between ordaining a bishop and a presbyter. Somewhat less objection lies (in reason) against the people's promoting presbyters to bishopricks, than their converting laymen into presbyters. The people cannot, in principle, be entitled to create ministers

of the word, on account of their doctrines, for they are supposed in theory to be the persons in quest of instruction; they, however, notwithstanding this, might be instrumental in elevating the presbyter to what churchmen signify by the episcopal rank; because the orthodoxy of the candidate might in some measure be presumed as ascertained, it having been determined on his first ordination. And this is an important distinction. But our controversy with the dissenter with respect to the subjects of ordination, regards the creation of pastors or presbyters, not of the ministers whom we signify by bishops.

These two points being premised, I think we may proceed to set Mr. James right with respect to Bingham.

Suppose Bingham had literally said that the popular election of bishops prevailed in the early ages of the Christian history, meaning thereby that bishops were elected solely by the people; and suppose too that Bingham had intended "presbyters" by "bishops," as Mr. James does, then there would have been ground for Mr. James's appeal. But, in the first place, it is to be observed that Bingham does not intend bishops to be the same as presbyters. Bingham means, as we do, different persons and orders by those terms. And he has written in his work on the "Antiquities of the Church," long dissertations on the different modes of appointing bishops, and appointing presbyters. The point in Bingham which concerns the question discussed in this and the two foregoing sections, is the ordination—of presbyters, not the ordination of bishops. And if Mr. James had referred us to Bingham for his opinion on our question,

he ought of course to have desired us to consult him in the ordination of presbyters, not on that of bishops. But so little has he understood his author and his subject, that he has done exactly the reverse. He has not referred us to that topic of Bingham's work which concerns the ordination of *presbyters*, with which we are now solely concerned, but to the ordination of *bishops*. He seemed to forget how Bingham used the terms. This by the way. It will be for me now briefly to state what are the opinions of Bingham, with respect to both ordination of bishops and presbyters, but more particularly of the latter.

As far as regards the ordination of bishops in the episcopalian sense of the word, it may be sufficient merely to state, that Bingham does not advocate a support—the dissenter's popular mode of ordination; and that he does not admit that the people had, even at times much later than the apostolic, the sole authority in the matter.

As to the point immediately at issue, a very slight examination of the two chapters of the work of Bingham, to which Mr. James refers his readers, will be sufficient to prove that Bingham does not assert or insinuate that the people had a right to make laymen presbyters. He says that some persons with a *show* of learning thought that they had, and some thought they had not. He tells us that the people were allowed great power in making bishops, and sometimes also much influence in the appointment of presbyters; but he does not teach us that he himself thought they could or ought to ordain presbyters, of or by themselves, without the bishop properly so called. He enters into particulars concerning the proceedings

of some elections to the presbytery. The ordination of St. Austin, long posterior to the apostolic period, is quoted by Bingham as being performed through the influence of the people, and is one of the two cases which appear most unfavourable to our views. But the people bring St. Austin to the bishop to be ordained, and appear to have used only strong and impetuous entreaties. The other case is that of Paulinus, and seems to have been attended by more violence. Still he was ordained by Lampius, a person whom Bingham, Mr. James's referee, introduces to our notice as an ecclesiastic of the episcopal order. And Bingham affords us no pretence for thinking that it was his opinion, either that the people were not indecorous in their demands of ordination for those ministers, or that they insisted on the ordination after the bishop had pronounced them as unqualified as heretics, or otherwise incompetent. Indeed, if it were as it appears from Bingham, only the bishops who could ordain, they must have had a veto in the ceremony. Ordination could not have been performed without them. This voice of the bishops and clergy, our contemporaries would, it seems, altogether omit. They are not contented with making the people a party; the people with them must be all in all. As for example, Mr. James himself on one occasion quotes the people's name in a council with the Apostles and elders, in order to prove that the early church government was a democracy. He appears to have had an understanding only for the word "people" in the passage, and to have not felt the force of the titles of their companions. And Bingham does warrant us in asserting not only

that bishops had necessarily a voice in every ordination, but also that the clergy at least had the chief voice. For exceptions, he says, to the rule of the people having a vote were made whenever the greatest part of the church were heretics or schismatics. Whoever takes a rational view of this statement, must perceive that it is probable, that these exceptions were not made by the people, and that the people were not the judges and condemners of their own heresies, but that these decisions were formed by those who knew the true doctrine. The people doubtless had a voice, and influence; such as, though seldom or never used by them, are accorded to them by the regulations of the Church of England. But what is more to our purpose at the present moment, it appears on the whole from this epitome of Bingham's sentiments, that he is evidently opposed to the opinion that the people had a right to ordain either presbyters or bishops. He not only does not assent to the doctrine of our opponents, but he appears to hold the directly contrary opinion. It was with what he only calls a *show* of learning, that the presbyterian notion was maintained, and he advances arguments and facts of an opposite tendency. Thus the learned authority which the dissenter presumed to be at variance with the church is actually in its favour; to which it may be added, that had Bingham been a controvertist of our faith, from any practices in the earlier centuries, or from even a mistaken view of either Scripture or any other argument, we could have confidently set the Scripture itself, and reason, and the apostolic fathers, in array against him; and should be obliged to acknowledge

the same lamentable weakness and delusion in his proofs which are the general and prevailing features of these arguments on which dissenters have hitherto relied with apparently unbounded assurance.

APPENDIX III.

The successive ministerial ordination signified in the preceding sections, the only mode appointed by divine law for our adoption.

Unity in society, spirit, and truth, combines the most essential properties of the Christian church, and properties which it is evidently the design of God in the Scriptures, that it should possess. (See Chap. III.) The four preceding sections of this Chapter have exhibited, it is presumed, a sufficient display of argument for the support of the belief, that there should be in the church this mode of appointment to the ministry, the ordination by ministers previously ordained, in contradistinction to the nomination and appointment of ministers by the people, and that all men should be united in the search of truth from the instruction of ministers appointed accordingly. It is deserving of farther and most particular remark, that this is the only mode of appointment which is agreeable to the will of God; for that, according to Scripture, there is no other of divine institution which has descended to our times. But we have moreover already consulted our reason, in aid of the true interpretation of Scripture, on this head, and we have pronounced the system of succession the only rational one. The separate argument from reason may be advanced

further in this place; for were there different modes of instituting to the ministry—one by the people in general; agreeably to their own opinions, and another by ministers preordained—the direct consequences would be, disagreement in doctrine, division in society, and, with an almost equal certainty, discordance in spirit. But it is certainly the design of God that this multifarious disunion should not exist; therefore it was not to be expected that the divine wisdom should have proposed to the church, after his extraordinary assistance was withdrawn from it, a plurality of systems, which must be directly and naturally destructive of the ends he designed.

APPENDIX IV.

Of the tendency to the propagation of unity in truth, spirit, and society, by the due performance of the successive ministerial ordination signified in the preceding sections.

There is, we observe, but one mode of ordination amongst men, of scriptural origin—that by ministers. Now it is a truism to affirm that this mode ought to be duly followed; but it remains to be more distinctly stated, that the mode, if exclusively adhered to and properly practised, would maintain the three christian unities considered in our third chapter. In the first place, as to the unity of the faith as derivable from Scripture. It appears, as for example in Titus i. 5—9; 2 Tim. ii. 2, that in ministerial ordination, the Apostle had such regard to the propagation of truth and the exclusion of error, that we can no more doubt its fitness for their production,

than the inspiration with which St. Paul composed his Epistles. Its tendency to produce these effects was one of its great recommendations in the mind of the Apostle; and that which tends to the propagation of the truth, must of course, as truth is single, tend to unity.

Secondly, as to the apostolic fathers. They cannot be said to have delivered their own opinion very explicitly on the subject. It has been declared not very much beyond their strict injunctions of obedience to a ministry of the word appointed by the mode of ordination in question. But one of them has given us extremely valuable testimony of another kind. He has informed us, in a concise but satisfactory form of expression, what was the judgment of the Apostles in the matter. He (Clemens, Epist. I. Corinth., chap. xlv.) teaches us that the Apostles appointed ministers of the word; whom they approved, because they knew that contentions would arise in the church respecting the ministry of bishops or pastors, if they did not appoint them. This powerfully asserts the conviction of the Apostles, that the ordination under consideration had a tendency to prevent disagreements and disputes, to ensure preachers concerning whom contentions ought not to arise, that is, of course, men in every respect qualified to satisfy the people, and therefore, among other qualifications, capable of preaching the truth. This father also instructs us that the Apostles laid down a scheme of the kind for succeeding ages.

Thirdly, a main part of our argument from reason for ministerial ordination hinges solely on its adap-

tation to the maintenance of truth in the world, and the prevention of its contrary. (Chap. VIII. § 2.)

Thus it may be said, that on the triple authority of reason, Scripture, and the primitive uninspired teachers, this mode of ordination tends, in its principle, to the preservation of unadulterated orthodoxy. It is no objection to the argument, that it has not preserved the unity in question. The people may in great multitudes have contravened the principle. The ordaining officers also, through inadvertency, may have at times admitted to the ministry candidates insufficiently qualified. The same dignitaries may not have received power as they ought, to divest the heretical, after ordination, of their ministerial functions. Various causes may have conspired to imperfections in practice. But we cannot argue from the abuse or neglect of a principle to its inutility, or its unsuitableness to the production of any consequence. The principle is clearly of that tendency, and the principle and its tendency is all that we are now concerned to investigate.

The tendency of the same mode of ordination universally practised on the same principle, would so evidently be to unity in church society, that it needs not the slightest demonstration.

Of the unity in spirit, the perpetuation by the same means is not so obvious. It is certainly rather explicitly declared in one of our extracts from the Roman father, and is, independently of him, easily evinced; for nothing is much more evident than that disagreement in faith has a tendency to produce divisions or separations; and this disunion, both in faith and society, are above all things prejudicial to

that spiritual concord so desirable among professors of Christianity; and that therefore the same means which produce unity in truth and society, are calculated to avert the enmities and jealousies which so frequently and so necessarily attend separation into different parties and interests.

We may therefore, I conceive, conclude that our proposition is established; to which it may be added, that it is not possible to imagine to what other temporal ends, of great moment, the ordination in question can conduce. It appears that it tends principally to these unities and their dependencies, if not to them alone.

APPENDIX V.

Of the design of the Deity to propagate unity in truth, society, and spirit, by means of the successive ministerial ordination contemplated in the preceding sections.

It is evidently the divine will, that unity in the three essential particulars named in the enunciation of this division of our subject, should exist in the Christian church. (See Chap. III.) And it appears from Appendix IV., that these unities may be propagated by the due exercise of the functions of the ordaining ministers. It is proposed to devote the present branch of our inquiry to the exposition of this important truth—that it was the design of the Almighty that there should be the relation of means and end between this mode of ordination and the unities to which we have adverted.

This point may be established, I conceive by two

distinct courses of argument, which mutually confirm each other.

In speaking of the divine designs where they are not very clearly revealed, it is not possible to be too cautious of error; but reasoning on their nature is not forbidden in every instance. Instances indeed occur in Scripture of rational views of these designs, two or three of which we have previously noticed in Chap. II. (particularly Rom. v. 10; viii. 32.) In accordance with the principle which is there suggested to us, we may commence our meditations on this head by affirming, that it is sufficiently certain, from our sections 1, 2, 3, 4, that ordination by pre-ordained ministers, to the exclusion of a popular appointment to the ministry, is an institution of divine authority. Now it is impossible, I conceive, without the greatest irreverence, to imagine that this ordinance was decreed by God without *some* intention and design. But we have seen that it was the design of the Founder of our religion, that his church should be united in truth, and spirit, and society. And in our preceding Appendix it appears that these unities were producible by a due exercise of those powers which ought to be vested in the ordaining functionaries. From all which it is reasonable to conclude, that it was the divine purpose to adapt the system of ordination which has been proposed in Scripture to those essential properties of the spiritual corporation of his followers. For it seems, in the first place, unreasonable to suppose, that if God designed that his church should be united in doctrine and spirit, as well as society, that he should have made no provision calculated to secure those transcendent

objects ; that he should have left men in general to their own individual conceits in interpreting no easily intelligible volume, capable, if submitted to the judgment of men indiscriminately, of diverse construction tending to an endless variety of division. Yet if it were not the design of God that the single principle of ordination, which has come down to us from Christ and the Apostles, should be a means of securing unity, he has left mankind without any special scheme for its security,—for it is not possible to see any other provision, if this be not one. This is one reason for believing that it is such. But, again, there must have been some design of the Deity, we cannot do otherwise than believe, in instituting the exclusive ordination by ministerial persons. And it is not easy, if possible, to conceive what other purpose it could materially serve, but the preservation and the extension of unity. And it has a tendency, as we observed under the head immediately preceding, to the production of these effects,—which effects are objects proposed for our attainment by divine authority. It is therefore probable that this was not only one, but the great design in the divine counsel for such an institution of ordination. In addition to which it ought to be considered, that an opposite course of leaving the conception of doctrines and formation of churches to the independent caprices of the mass of mankind, would be directly productive of confusion ; it is therefore to be believed, that as the opposite course would have destroyed, or rather prevented unity ; so its establishment (for design we cannot separate from the system,) must have been designed to preserve it.

Such appears the decision of reason on a general view of the question. We observed that the greatest caution is necessary in reasoning on the divine purpose, where it is not clearly revealed: in this instance, however, that purpose has, I think it will appear, been not obscurely discovered to us. And how far our reasoning is supported by the consideration of our particular grounds of argument, it will be for us immediately to consider.

That it is a purpose of Providence, a portion of the divine scheme of salvation, that the element of unity in truth should be promoted by ministerial ordination, is not merely a matter of argument, but of positive revelation. It is indicated in Scripture, from passages already cited, that the appointment to the ministry, by the delegates of the Apostles, was, in part, for the purpose of securing preachers of the truth. The emphatic direction of St. Paul to Titus, (chap. i. 9—11,) in his choice of ministers, is strongly declaratory of the object of his ordaining power. It was, again, one of the aims and ends of the same inspired writer, in more immediate instructions to the same effect. (2 Tim. ii. 2.) Nor can it be for a moment doubted, though it is not expressly declared, that the Apostles, and even Christ himself, who were ordainers in the first instance, selected those persons for the ministry whom they deemed fit for the office, and that the authority to ordain which they possessed was exercised partly for the purpose of appointing those who were deserving of the honour, and of excluding the unworthy.

The same aptitude which we have observed in our quotations from Scripture, to evince both the ten-

dency to christian unity, and the design of its propagation in ministerial ordinations, is inherent in our extract from the epistle of Clemens to the Corinthians. The words of Clemens indeed express in plainer terms the design of the Apostles, than the fitness of their measures to its accomplishment. They are represented by our author to have appointed presbyters and deacons, and even successors to themselves, for the express purpose of precluding contentions in the church respecting its ministry. If any evidence be, in the slightest degree, wanting in this branch of our argument to make our case complete, it is that this father does not, in words, declare that the Apostles adopted this course with a view to the conservation and propagation of truth in particular. His testimony, however, in the passage referred to, and in another of the 42nd chapter of his first epistle, where he teaches that the Apostles appointed those men presbyters and deacons whom they approved as fit for the office, make a case of induction almost as strong as the positive declaration. For it is neither possible to conceive that they (the Apostles) could have intended to prevent contentions respecting the ministration of the word, without intending to avoid giving occasion for dispute, by nominating persons whose doctrines were worthy of acceptance; nor that they would have appointed teachers on their own approbation of their qualifications, without designing to appoint teachers of truth, and to preserve its doctrines in the world:

The tendency of ministerial ordinations to preserve the truth, has been sufficiently stated in Chap.

VIII. § 2, and Appendix IV. as the argument of reason. It only remains to be asserted, that it is evidently the *design* of reason, in advocating that system of ordination, to produce, in part, the same effect; and that this design is a strong independent evidence of the divine intention. (See Chap. II. p. 9.)

It follows therefore, as a credible inference, on the authority of our three sources of argument, as well as in a more general view of the subject, that it was the design of the Almighty that men should at least preserve the knowledge of the truth, by the means in contemplation.

We must now proceed to notice more particularly the two unities in society and spirit. Scripture, I believe, does not expressly reveal the design of Providence, that the system of ministerial ordination should tend to unite the church in bonds of fellowship and affection; still it is a purpose capable of a very striking development.

I commence with the testimony of Clemens Romanus, contained in a passage before cited, (p. 236). The Apostles, according to him, designed, in the appointment, by their own personal act, of the ministers of the church, to prevent contentions in the ecclesiastical body. This is evidence quite in point. It is scarcely possible, consistently with brevity, to convey the idea of unity in spirit, if not in society, in stronger terms than the absence of contention. But the state of the Corinthian church, and the prevailing argument of the epistle addressed to it by Clemens, are unquestionable proofs that the Apostles, by this mode of ordination, intended, by

the prevention of *contentions*, the prevention of parties and sects. The tendency of the Corinthians to disunion, or rather their actual divisions, are clearly manifested in the Scriptures. The same spirit and its fruits appear not to have expired before the rebukes of the Apostle: they survived to engage the anxiety of his pious fellow-labourer. The burden of Clemens' letter to the Corinthians is their schismatic conduct, and arguments for their reformation. One of those arguments is, that the Apostles ordained the ministry of the church with a view to prevent contentions: whence it evidently follows, that in contentions he included and intended that tendency to division and actual separation which deformed the church that he was then addressing; and that it was the design of the Apostles by their ordinations to prevent such division, or to promote unity in society as well as in spirit.

If we, secondly, inquire what is the voice of reason in this question, it may be immediately answered, that, knowing the unities under consideration to be desirable, it is among its designs to further the attainment and security of them, by the process of ordination which we contemplate. One of the two ends in view (ecclesiastical unity) is in fact inseparably connected with the system when duly practised. The other is so naturally dependent upon it, and involved in its principle, that it is to be calculated upon as one of its direct consequences, and may be reasonably designed to be effected by its adoption and continuance.

The general argument to prove the design of the Deity from a view of Revelation, has been stated in

our second paragraph of this Appendix. To this it may be added, that the Almighty is represented in his holy word, as the author, not of confusion in the churches, but of peace. (1 Cor. xiv. 33.) If, therefore, a system of divine appointment, as ministerial ordination unquestionably is, exist; if that system tend, as it does, to the unities in question; and if those unities be made, as they are, by the divine will, objects for human endeavour and attainment, it is probable that the system is intended for the promotion of these purposes.

On the combination of evidence contained in this Appendix, it may be pronounced, that unity in society and spirit, as well as in truth, are designed by the divine Legislator to be propagated amongst men, by the instrumentality of such ministerial ordination as is signified in our sections immediately preceding.

SECTION V.

Of Prelacy; or a more particular inquiry into the nature of the ordaining ministry, signified in Sections II. III. and IV., in which it is shown, that it is a third order of ministers, and superior to presbyters and deacons, corresponding to the English bishops, and is prescribed to the church by Scripture, the apostolic fathers, and reason.

The bishops of the Church of England are an order of ministers superior to priests, or presbyters, and deacons: they ordain and govern the inferior orders. This precedence and superiority is called *Prelacy*. It is contended, that it is agreeable to

Scripture, the fathers of the apostolic age, and reason, that such a superior rank of ministers should exist. But as the argument from reason has been generally, I believe, but little insisted on in this particular branch of our subject, I shall, in some measure, invert the order which I have hitherto pursued, and treat of the reason of the case after the consideration of Scripture and the primitive practice.

The nonconformists deny that prelacy is derivable from either the apostolic fathers, or the Scripture. As may be seen, by reference to Section 5, Chap. VII., one exclaims, my appeal is to the New Testament: "if prelacy cannot be found there, my argument, in all I contend for, is sound." The conclusion of this sentence by no means follows from the supposition in its commencement; but the whole, at all events, shows the light in which prelacy is regarded by the nonconformist. The same author quotes Clemens and Polycarp, in defence of his opinion, and does not admit that prelacy existed before the third century, classing it with innovations and corruptions. The arguments of the most erudite dissenters are detailed in the section above referred to; and, in opposition to those arguments, it will be our business now to prove, that prelacy is to be found in that Book to which dissenters appeal, and have so often appealed with much mistaken confidence: and that it is also conspicuous in the pages of the apostolic fathers, and in those of one of them which they have quoted as not bearing any marks of its existence.

To begin with Scripture. The arguments of

dissenters on this topic of our inquiry, first referred to in Section 5, Chap. VII., divested of all unnecessary verbiage, amount to these:—that the terms *bishops* and *presbyters*, when applied to men, signify the same ministers; that the power of ordaining does not necessarily imply any superiority of rank in the ordaining person, over the person ordained; and that the degrees of bishop, or presbyter, and deacon are the only two permanent orders of the ministry. Now, in answer to these allegations, I am willing to concede, for the sake of brevity, any exceptions, important as they may be, which we might make against the former of them. I will grant, merely on this account, that “bishop” and “presbyter,” as terms applied to human beings, always mean the same kind of minister; and I have no disposition to differ from Milton in his opinion, that the ordaining power does not imply imparity of rank; but, notwithstanding these concessions, it is plainly perceptible, that there is a permanent order of ministry superior to presbyters, and one which corresponds with our prelatical order of bishop. The dissenters have, in my opinion, been betrayed into their error by such a precipitate judgment, as would have been much less surprising in the school-boy, than in the adult scholar. They have evidently bewildered themselves with the word “bishop” as it stands in Scripture. It appears never to have entered their minds, that it is not the *names* of church ministers in which the question lies, but in this consideration—whether there was an order of ministers, under whatever designation, superior to presbyters; and whether that order was intended to be perpetual.

The question is not whether our bishops are honoured with their proper appellation, but whether there ought to be an order of ordaining and presiding ministers, corresponding to that of our prelates. It may be that our bishops do not bear their most legitimate title: it may be that, in strict propriety, they ought to be denominated apostles. If this be the fact, and if, by any providential circumstances, the claims of their office to the veneration of the people be generally acknowledged in this intellectual age, higher honours await that illustrious body of men, in times which have spoken evil of dignities with tremendous audacity, than ever yet were bestowed upon the order since the foundation of ecclesiastical society.

Now an examination of those passages which (Section 3,) were adduced from the New Testament, in proof of ministerial ordination, will show that the persons who ordained, in every instance, were of a superior order to presbyters and deacons, and had authority over them. And it may be confidently affirmed, that no case can be discovered of ordination, in the New Testament, by human authority, in which it appears a minister of that order was not engaged as an agent. The passages in Section 3, to which I allude, concern particularly the twelve Apostles, (in Acts vi. 3, 6,) Paul and Barnabas, (in Acts xiv. 23,) and Titus and Timothy, in the Epistles which they received from their distinguished instructor. Now these men were, according to Scripture, when ordaining officers, superior in rank and authority to presbyters and deacons. This is one point to be proved.

The dispute in this instance between churchmen and dissenters, is generally confined to the cases of only three of the eminent ministers just enumerated, —St. Paul, Titus, and Timothy. On this narrow ground it will be sufficient to make good our position.

Now it is so certain, that the churches which St. Paul planted and addressed by letter, were under his guidance and authority; there is such a profusion of proofs of the fact, scattered through the history of that Apostle, that I confess it struck me with astonishment when I first saw his prelacy called in question. It has, however, been more than insinuated, that St. Paul did not exercise over the church a controlling power. After a variety of observations, abounding in error, but not bearing very materially on our question, and requiring more space for exposure than I am willing to afford, Mr. Conder, in his book II. chap. i. § 2, proceeds as follows:—
 “Throughout the christian societies, the authority of the Apostles, as the inspired prophets of Jesus Christ, his companions during the days of his flesh, and the witnesses of his sufferings, claimed to be recognized on every point included in their divine commission. No christian church could aspire to independence of their authority, without disregarding the moral evidence which attested the truth of the gospel. In the primitive churches, accordingly, there was a deference paid in all respects to their directions. The Apostles, however, were studiously careful to lay upon the churches no greater burden than those restraints (Acts xv. 28) which were morally necessary, and those obligations. (Gal. ii. 10) which were consonant both with kindness and

equity. They combated in every form the spirit of imposition, exhorting the disciples to stand fast in the liberty with which Christ had made them free, and not to be again entangled with the yoke of bondage. St. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, seems remarkably solicitous to avoid the stern language of authority, 'And herein (he writes) I give my *advice*.' (2 Cor. viii. 10); 'Nevertheless, we have not used this power, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.' (1 Cor. ix. 12.)"

The author of this passage evidently imagines that the people paid a voluntary deference to the opinions of the Apostles,—not that the Apostles exerted over them any official authority. The grounds of the opinion, as stated above, we will cursorily examine in order. With respect to the transaction referred to in Acts xv. 28, supposing that the expression of Mr. Conder "studiously careful to lay upon the churches no greater burden than those restraints which were *morally necessary*," were very intelligible and true; it does not follow that the Apostles might not be exercising a dominion over the people; they might be careful of not exceeding the bounds of reason, or propriety, or truth, in any of their decisions: still those decisions might, nevertheless, be the mandates of authority. The phrase of "laying on the people a burden," savours also very strongly of an authoritative power; and when it is considered that the name of the Holy Ghost is associated with that of the Apostles, in the decree issued from the council, it may, I think, be considered quite a sufficient evidence of the authority of at least this specific instance of apostolic instruction. The next

argument (from Gal. ii. 10,) is, in short, nothing to the purpose, as it is an intimation from three Apostles only to two others. The third observation is, in part, so nearly a verbatim transcript of Gal. v. 1, that I cannot, I think, be charged with any want of charity in believing that that verse supplied the argument; and yet a more mistaken idea seldom occurs in nonconformist lucubrations, for the text alluded to does not refer to any freedom from apostolic authority: — indeed it is an example of dictation on the part of the Apostles of an extremely authoritative nature. The liberty intended is exemption from Jewish ceremonial law, — and the Apostle commands them to assert that liberty: and this command to be free, was a command which they were not free to disobey. But, lastly, two passages from the Epistles to the Corinthians have been cited. It is true, that in these two instances St. Paul did, as he may have done in others, avoid the exercise of authority. He gave his advice only respecting a particular collection of money for charitable purposes; and he did not avail himself of his right of being supported by the Corinthians while at Corinth, but maintained himself by his handicraft: and though it were not correct for him to have spoken by commandment, and to have thus used compulsion (2 Cor. viii. 8) in the first instance; if it is intended that Paul had not the right of maintenance from the Corinthians, and authority over the church of Corinth, nothing can be farther from the truth. The mere occasional moderation or indulgence of a ruler does not compromise his supremacy; and, indeed, the very expression which

St. Paul used with respect to his declining to receive support from the Corinthians, implied his authority to claim, if he pleased, their contributions. And if the erroneous statements, by false interpretations of Scripture and otherwise, of Mr. Conder and his friends, and their sophistical reasonings, did not pervade almost every page of their writings, (I pen my words with the most deliberate and cautious avoidance of exaggeration,) I would ask him how he *could* have declared, that St. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, seems "remarkably solicitous to avoid the stern language of authority," when, in the two Epistles to that church, he has in one place said, "The rest will I set in order when I come;" in another, "Shall I come to you with a rod?" and in a third, "I verily have judged already concerning him that hath done this deed, when ye are gathered together, to deliver such an one unto Satan: therefore put away from yourselves that wicked person"? These are only three instances of the language of authority, to which I have turned merely from memory; and I know, that if I were to examine the Epistles, or even recollect myself still farther, that the bold statement of the nonconformist might be met by a much more formidable phalanx of contradictions. (See particularly 2 Cor. xiii. 2, 10.) It is in one of the Epistles to the Corinthians, that St. Paul also alludes to his having "the care of all the churches." It is true that he did not always exercise authority over them; but that he often did, and had it in his power so to do, is a feature on the face of Scripture to which an attentive observer can scarcely be insensible. And

as positive instances of the Apostles including the elders among those who are subject to their episcopal influence, it may be sufficient to observe, that St. Peter exercised the authority of admonishing the elders of the churches he addressed, (1 Pet. v. 1); and that St. Paul caused the elders of Ephesus to take a long journey, in order to receive his last charge from him, entirely, as it appears, for his own accommodation.

The authority of the Apostle St. Paul over his churches, and over the elders of Ephesus more particularly, receives a remarkable confirmation, and the doctrine we are maintaining, an accession of argument, in the fact, that towards the close of his life we find him delegating the authority which he possessed in ruling the churches to other persons, and particularly to Timothy and Titus; men not inspired in any extraordinary degree—ministers who had the power of ordaining presbyters and deacons. And it is not undeserving of observation, that the appointment of one of them was to the church of Ephesus, of which we read St. Paul had foretold, that amongst the elders there would arise false teachers. (Acts xx. 30.) St. Paul writes to Timothy, "I besought thee still to abide at Ephesus, that thou might charge some that they preach no other doctrine;" again, "Against a presbyter receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses." To Titus he writes, "For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou mightest set in order things that were wanting in every city, and ordain elders as I had appointed thee." Thus it appears, from what we have seen in this and the third section, that

Timothy and Titus had, one or other, authority from St. Paul to set in order things that are wanting, to charge the ministers of doctrine to preach the truth, (most probably the presbyters mentioned in Acts xx. 30,) and to receive accusations against presbyters. These are evidently acts of superiors to all the rest of the ministry in the places in question. Need anything bespeak more plainly the preeminence of Timothy over the presbyters, than thus having the power to charge them, and to receive accusations against them? Or can it be denied, that the commission which is given to Titus, to set in order things that are wanting in the cities of Crete, implies a trust superior to the powers of the resident ministry? It is attempted to set aside these arguments by strange misrepresentations. When the same passages which I have produced above, from the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, were lately advanced by a presbyter of our church, in support of prelacy, the reply hazarded by one of the most celebrated dissenting ministers was, in part, (see p. 86,) that he supposed the force of the proof lay in this:—Timothy was a bishop, and ordained elders: and as the *ordainer* is superior to the *ordained*, therefore a bishop is superior to a presbyter. I am extremely unwilling to impute to Mr. James, or to any other gentleman of the least liberal education, a wilful intention to falsify a statement, or disguise an argument; but if I give him credit for sincerity, which I am under no difficulty whatever of doing, knowing, as I do, the many flagrant mistakes of dissenting erudition, I am most reluctantly compelled, by a regard for truth, to convict him of

an unconscious perversion of his competitor's reasoning. Much of the force of that reasoning evidently did not lie in the ordaining power of Timothy and Titus. There were other texts, as we have shown above, on which, in part, the episcopal combatant rested his opinion : and these Mr. James, by some kind of delusion, omitted to notice.

On the same, and other arguments, we still maintain our point against Mr. James and his fraternity. And, in the first place, though we do not argue that the ordaining power necessarily implies superiority, yet we hold that that power is not liable to those objections which dissenters often bring against it, as a mark of superiority, and is rather to be supposed one of its evidences, than the contrary. The objections to ordination implying precedency, are the following :—1st, that “if Timothy was a bishop, then he was ordained by inferiors, for he was set apart by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.” (See p. 87.) The imposition of the hands of the presbytery might only be, and probably was, performed in concurrence with the Apostle : like as in our church (so carefully has she been conformed to the apostolic model,) the hands of the presbytery are directed to be laid on the heads of the newly-ordained presbyters under the episcopal commission ; and it is not known that this laying on of the hands of the presbytery does not refer to Timothy's being ordained a presbyter. But this is very far indeed from the exposure of the fallacy of the objection, that if Timothy were a bishop, that is a prelate, then he was ordained by inferiors. Did not the writer of this objection know that Timothy was not ordained without the im-

sition of St. Paul's hands? (2 Tim. i. 6.) And what is of more importance in the question immediately before us, it is expressly written, that St. Paul himself appointed both Timothy and Titus to their posts at Ephesus and in Crete. (1 Tim. i. 3; Tit. i. 5.) Mr. Conder, who falls into the same mistake, probably on the common authority of some ancient nonconformist, has not forgotten, like his colleague Mr. James, that Timothy was ordained by the imposition of St. Paul's hands; but instead of supposing it probable or possible that Timothy should have undergone that ceremony from both St. Paul and the presbytery, he argues, from the act of the presbytery, that St. Paul was included among them as a presbyter: he finds it convenient to consider Paul only as one of the presbytery. Against this *imagination*, for which there is scarcely the remotest semblance of authority, we set our positive *knowledge*, that St. Paul was an Apostle who ordained presbyters; and that Timothy was not ordained without such authority, is all that is necessary for our purpose.

It is furthermore objected to show that inferiors may ordain; that St. Paul and Barnabas were ordained by a lower order of ministers. This, again, is a mistake. They were ordained by the Holy Ghost. (See Acts xiii. 2.)

These are the chief arguments of dissenters, from Scripture, against the superiority of rank in persons ordaining, to those who are ordained. It might be argued, very reasonably and successfully, on the opposite side, that it is probable, that the commission and authority to ordain should be a symbol of supe-

riority, than inferiority, or even equality. Persons thus commissioned are distinguished men: honourable distinction does not generally indicate subordination or co-ordination. But it is sufficient only to have observed, that there is no instance of the appointment of christian ministers, in Scripture, by human agency, in which another minister was not employed, of an order like that of St. Paul and Timothy and Titus, who had authority over presbyters and deacons.

To pass from Scripture to ecclesiastical authority, I beg to refer the reader to Chap. VII. § 5, p. 86, for an objection, made with an air of triumph, against the ordination of prelates in the Church of England: to which it is necessary to answer merely, that it is quite beside our question. The way in which the bishops of the Church are ordained, is almost as irrelevant to the subject immediately in debate, as the mode of appointment to the office of churchwarden or grave-digger. Our argument is, that Timothy and Titus were ordaining officers, and superior to presbyters, similarly to our bishops. Mr. James argues that they were not, because bishops are ordained by bishops, &c., in the English church. We are not discussing the ordination of those divines who are styled bishops by the episcopalian, but the ordination of presbyters and deacons; and considering whether these latter ministers were ordained by superiors. The difference between ordaining a presbyter, and the dignitary here understood by a bishop, has been slightly noticed in a preceding chapter (pp. 238, 239). The Church of England does supply cases of superiority in the ordaining

authorities exactly in point. The superiority in our church does hold in the case of bishops ordaining presbyters. Thus, if the dissenter argues against the church for her inconsistency, he proceeds on a false assumption, and ends in as erroneous a conclusion.

There are yet other objections to prelacy of different kinds.

One of our opponents asserts, that neither Timothy nor Titus appears to have been appointed to a local episcopacy. By which, as far as can be understood, he intends that they did not respectively reside, for a constancy, at Ephesus, or in Crete, after their appointments. But, it may be asked, how does this observation, if true, affect the superiority of their order? It is of course ridiculous to imagine that it follows, that because they did not continue very long at a time in Crete, or at Ephesus, that they were not superior to the order of presbyters, during their residence, or even in their absence. It might, with almost as much reason, be urged, that the bishop of London, on a late occasion, was not superior to a presbyter, because he made a temporary sojourn at Rotterdam; or that St. Paul was not superior to the presbyters of Ephesus, because he was not their continually resident bishop, or, indeed, was not superior to the presbyters in "all the churches" of which he had "the care;" as it is impossible he could be a constant resident in every one of them. We do not affect to suppose that our bishops are in every respect like Timothy and Titus: our question concerns only the superiority of their order to presbyters; and, as far as the simple fact of superiority goes, we contend they *are* alike. The

superiority of the order is evidently quite independent of the place where the person who belongs to it happens to reside.

It is further alleged against the superiority of Timothy and Titus over presbyters, that it is not known that they were *even presbyters*, ('were bishops,' are the words in the usual scriptural sense of the term); that their mission was clearly of an extraordinary nature, and had little in common with the pastoral or episcopal office; that is, as it is intended, with the presbyterian office. Admitting it were true that it is unknown that Timothy and Titus were presbyters, this objection is futile in the extreme. If it appears that they were invested with powers equivalent to those of our bishops, and that they were of an order answering to that of those prelates, this is all which we are immediately interested to know. As to their mission being of an extraordinary nature, it comes to nothing as an objection;—it was extraordinary. They are almost the only two appointments of uninspired men, in Scripture, to offices of an apostolical and prelatical description. Nor was it to be expected, probably that we should read of many appointments of the kind in the Scriptures, while the Apostles, who performed the functions of prelacy, were alive. But what of the fewness of the instances recorded of such appointments? The number of the appointments does not alter their nature.

And thus, after the objections of dissenters have been examined, the arguments of the church with respect to Timothy and Titus, return in their full force—that the Apostles were above presbyters

in degree; and that they delegated some of their prelatial authority to uninspired men, not only by commissioning them to ordain presbyters, but also by giving them power to set in order things that were wanting in the churches; to charge ministers, and to receive accusations against them if any were to be preferred. These powers imply superiority, and—with the exception of one of them, the privilege of ordaining—have never been, that I recollect, very vehemently impugned. And they are powers which were exercised by the Apostles, and others after them, by their appointment. The period embraced by the records of Scripture, includes the nomination by the Apostles of uninspired men as their successors in office. An order of ministry superior to the presbytery, not only existed in the first instance, but was not intended to expire with the Apostles, and with men of their supernatural endowments; it was continued in the persons of men possessing ordinary talents, and thus, by scriptural precedent, transmitted an example for successive generations.

Secondly, the same order is recognized by the apostolic fathers.

The literary dissenter defends the contrary opinion, by allusions to passages in Polycarp and Clemens Romanus, which are transferred to the fifth section of our seventh chapter. (See pp. 91, 92.) Campbell and a Doctor Fletcher appear to agree in the opinion, that as Polycarp spoke in his epistle of only two orders, (see p. 92,) and as Clemens wrote of the Apostles having constituted bishops, or presbyters, and deacons,—adding that bishops and deacons were no new device, having been predicted by Isaiah,—he

implies, that any other orders of ministry besides those two, might be styled a new device ; and that, on these grounds, neither Polycarp nor Clemens knew of more than two orders in their time. I will endeavour, as briefly as possible, to show, that the language of Polycarp and Clemens does not warrant this conclusion. First with respect to Polycarp. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Philippians, mentions only presbyters and deacons. If it could be contended, that Polycarp knew of no order of minister besides those of presbyter and deacon, because he mentions them only, it might be argued that St. Paul was unacquainted with any other, for the same reason. But the reason is evidently inconclusive as regards St. Paul, St. Paul himself being superior to both. The reason, therefore, is not satisfactory in the case of Polycarp ; and Polycarp was, indeed, of the identical order whose existence is denied. The allusion (in page 92) to the "similitude" will be considered when we come to the writings of Ignatius. The non-residence of a prelate at Philippi, in the time of Polycarp, as in the days of St. Paul, is quite sufficient to account, not only for his silence respecting "what is proper in the character and conduct of a bishop," (p. 92,) but for his addressing the Philippians at all. Thus much, for the present, as to the probability of Polycarp being unacquainted with the prelatical order.

Now, secondly, as to Clemens Romanus. I think it must be almost evident to intuition, that those words which form the basis of the dissenter's argument, *considered by themselves*, do not bear the construction which has been imposed upon them. It

appears that I might easily speak of any two or more regulations or appointments, and afterwards pronounce them of ancient origin, without intending to signify that all others were modern institutions, and were actually, at the time of my writing, non-existent. If the words of Clement do "manifestly imply," that any other office in the church than the two which he had mentioned, might be justly styled a new device, the implication must be observed in the drift or tenor of his remarks connected with them: but here proof is equally wanting. According to the view taken by Dr. Fletcher, indeed, the conclusion certainly follows. He intimates his conviction, 1st, that Clemens added, "Nor was this a new device," *in order to satisfy us* (!) that he did not use the word in a vague manner for church officers in general, but as expressive of all the distinct orders that were established by them in the church; 2ndly, that Clemens' *express design* was to acquaint us (!) what the Apostles did for accommodating the several churches they planted with pastors and assistants; and adds also, 3rdly, that it would seem strange that the Holy Spirit had given no previous intimation, if there were such an order, of the order of prelates. But these views of Clemens' intentions are groundless assumptions, in opposition to strong evidence of design of a different nature. It is clear, to the least attentive perusal of Clemens' epistle, that the Corinthians were disobedient to their presbyters and deacons, and that the object of Clemens is to reduce them to order. In conformity with this purpose, nothing is more natural than for Clemens to remind the people that the Apostles appointed

presbyters and deacons, and to strengthen their authority with a prediction of the prophet. This is all his argument requires, to suppose that he intended to inform the Corinthians *all* the Apostles did; that they did this, and *nothing more*, is to suppose him to write beside his purpose, or rather beyond it: his words, therefore, cannot reasonably be interpreted in the way which Dr. Fletcher imagines. And with respect to the seeming strangeness, that the bishop, 'properly so called,' should not be predicted by the spirit of prophecy; it would have been much *more strange* if the prediction had been explicit and unambiguous; as, for instance, that the Messiah will choose twelve Apostles, and the Apostles will appoint presbyters, or bishops, and deacons in all the churches. Nor is there any real difficulty in believing, that the general expression "bishops," in the prophet, was meant to include the prelate as well as the elder, notwithstanding Clemens' application of it. But we may rise from negative to positive grounds. There are those of the apostolic fathers to be examined, whose evidence will enable us to determine much more accurately the invalidity of the sectarian argument, that Clemens and Polycarp knew only of two orders of ministry, and the first of these illustrious Christians whom I shall summon to an examination, is no other than Clemens himself. It may be truly said, in the outset of our inquiry, that the passage of Clemens, in which he declares that the Apostles appointed presbyters and deacons, according to what we have seen in Scripture, really contains the names of three orders at once; and that Clemens, as well as

Polycarp, was of the episcopal degree. But, further than this, in chapters xl. and xli. of his first epistle, he labours to heal the schisms of the Corinthians, by instructing them that they should do all things in order; and argues from the ritual of the Jewish church, that sacrifices were not to be offered in every place, nor offered at all unless inspected by the high-priest and the other ministers; that the high-priest, the priests, and the Levites, had all their peculiar offices. He then goes on, in the next chapter,—“Jesus Christ was sent by God,—the Apostles by Jesus Christ. The Apostles appointed bishops, or elders, and deacons;” and asks what astonishment it should excite, that persons who received the commission from Christ, (*i. e.* the Apostles,) appointed the fore-mentioned ministers? Here again are three orders at once, allowing the Apostles to be one; and the writer illustrates his argument by reference to *three* Jewish orders. But the question from this father is also particularly, whether the apostolic order was intended to be permanent. Hear him, then, farther: he adds almost immediately, in chap. xliv. “And the Apostles, knowing that contentions would arise touching the oversight of the church, appointed the ministers already named, *i. e.* bishops, or presbyters, and deacons; and afterwards, or in their time, prescribed a course or succession, that, on their decease, other approved men might take their office. Therefore we ought not (adds he) to reject the ministers who have been appointed by *them*, viz. the Apostles, or, either in their time, or subsequently, by other illustrious or learned characters.” Let it be asked in

this place, whether Clemens knew of no order in the church ministry, in succession to the Apostles, superior to presbyters, when he declares, almost as plainly as words can express his ideas, that there were illustrious men appointed by the Apostles to succeed them in office. It is obvious also to remark a correspondence between the Scriptures and Clemens Romanus, which is a mutual confirmation of the correctness of our interpretation. The sentence of our author, which makes other illustrious persons take the office of the Apostles, we see verified in the appointment by St. Paul of Timothy and Titus to the episcopal station. Clemens lived in the age of the Apostle Paul, and died about the year of our Lord 100.

We now turn to Ignatius. The three orders of bishop, and presbyter, and deacon, are spoken of repeatedly in the genuine and undisputed portions of his epistles. To the Philadelphians he writes, "Attend to the bishop, and to the presbytery, and to the deacons." In addressing the Magnesians, he writes of Damas as their bishop, of Bassus and Apollonius as two of their presbyters, and Zotion as one of their deacons, charging them, in the most solemn manner, to render the bishop, after the example of their presbyters, all due reverence. In his letter to the Trallians there is this injunction: "Be subject to your bishop, as to the Lord; be subject to the presbyters, as to the Apostles of Jesus Christ; and please, by all means, the deacons, as ministers of the mysteries of Jesus Christ." He expatiates severally on the characters of deacons, a bishop, and presbyters, and adds, that an elect church cannot

exist without these ministers. These are a few of the passages which occur in his epistles, equally declaratory of the existence of three separate orders, of which the bishop appears to be the chief. Dr. Pye Smith, indeed, in quoting others, which he is pleased to call bishop-idolizing passages, such as, "All ye follow the bishop as Jesus Christ (follows) the Father; and the presbyter as the Apostles; and reverence the deacons as the command of God;" though he has drawn *some* of his extracts from impure sources, has affected to cast discredit on parts of undisputed genuineness, by affixing on them a character of extravagance which he thinks perfectly inconsistent with truth, and thus consigns them to that division of the epistle which is believed to be corrupted by interpolation. This gentleman, whom I have heard mentioned as respectable for his learning, has, in this instance exhibited a lamentable deficiency in recollection and judgment. He might, with equal wisdom, considering certain passages of Scripture abstractedly by themselves, set aside the divine inspiration of several of its parts, as the authenticity of these extracts from Ignatius, on account of the veneration they ascribed as due to the ministry. He appears to have forgotten, in the ardour of his zeal and indignation, that we are commanded in Scripture to love our neighbours *as ourselves*; that *servants* are commanded to be obedient to their *masters, as unto Christ*, and *wives* to be subject to their *husbands, as to the Lord*. To which it may be added, that Polycarp gives a similar injunction of obedience to presbyters and deacons, in an epistle, the integrity of whose text, where extant,

is superior to suspicion. These observations are sufficient to show, that the derision of the dissenter does not avail to expunge the testimony of Ignatius to the episcopal order from those pages, which, on other grounds, bear the impress of genuineness: Ignatius died only a very few years (at the most twelve, I believe,) after the first century, and was a contemporary of Clemens Romanus and Polycarp. Thus, it appears, on the united evidence of two at least of this celebrated triumvirate, that three orders of ministry existed in their age. And though we were to suppose, in opposition to truth, that Polycarp was not bishop of Smyrna, yet that he, as well as the others, could not be ignorant of their existence.

It will be seen, by a reference to our third ground of argument, in Section 2, of this chapter, that I attempted no farther to decide the question of preference, in regard to the number of persons concerned in any single case of ordination, whether it ought to be one or more, than by avowing my conviction, that reason appeared rather in favour of a plurality of voices, than of confining the investiture of the ministerial office to the judgment of an individual, entirely on his own private knowledge and experience. In consideration of the greater probability, in a multitude of approvers than in one alone, of the cognizance of any existent errors in the candidates for the ministry, it must, I think, be confessed, that an advantage lies on the side of numbers. But, on the other hand, as all the congregations of the church ought to be united in the truth, in spirit, and society, and to do all things with decency and in order; and as prelacy concerns the ecclesiastical government, as

well as ordination ; these important ends of a visible association of Christians appear, on a reasonable view of the matter, to be more easily and more certainly secured by the institution of a precedency over the general body, some focus of management, than by leaving detached parties of the presbytery, without communication with the rest of the ministry, to their own private and independent authority. This brings us at once to a government in the hands of a smaller number than the mass of the presbytery. And I know not how a more reasonable and practicable scheme could be devised, than that each district should possess its own president, and that all presidents should be amenable to the authority of one. It is superfluous to attempt the details of a system; (or to show that the supremacy of an individual over foreign nations is not a necessary consequence) : if that view which has been taken be conducive to unity and order, we have already arrived at the conclusion, that, for the well-doing of the church, prelacy is a rational appointment ; and, in addition to any independent examination of the question, as regards the church alone, we might argue, from cases of some analogy, that popular prejudice, particularly in the more civilized nations, runs in favour of such a scheme, when the sovereignty of states, the command of armies, and the government of towns, are committed to individuals, assisted by inferiors in various degrees of subordination. It would appear, then, according to reason, that a mixed administration of ecclesiastical affairs is best ; and this, in ordination and in government, is what both Scripture seems to prescribe, and our church to adopt ;

and in this form of administration, a superior order of ministry to presbyters is, of course, a necessary constituent. Another argument of a similar character, as being a reasonable inference from a certain fact, arises from the silence of history as to the introduction of prelacy, if it is not of scriptural origin. Let any man imagine how it is probable that prelacy should have crept into the church, as an innovation, without the usurpation of authority, giving offence to the presbytery, and without our hearing any thing of the disputes and contests to which it would naturally give rise, in the early writers ; and he will be constrained to acknowledge, that it is reasonable to believe that it was not an appointment subsequent to the apostolic age, nor unsupported by apostolic practice.

In conclusion, then, it may be observed, that both the Scriptures and the apostolic fathers, and, I will add, reason, agree in recording the institution of the three orders. In the *latter part of the first century*, the chief order appears to have been entitled *bishops* : Clemens does not supply their name :—he only designates them as successors of the Apostles, agreeably to Scripture. The name, as we have before observed, is not of essential consequence. The main point for observation is, that there was an order, in the apostolic times, which stood in the rank of the Apostles above the presbyter, and was continued by the Apostles themselves. Bingham and others have truly observed, indeed, that ministers of the superior order, which we now denominate bishops, were named, in the earliest age of Christianity, Apostles : and doubtless, as they were suc-

cessors of the Apostles, this is their most appropriate appellation. Humility probably prompted the adoption of their second title; but the successors of the Apostles are not the less entitled to the respect and submission of all classes of the people.

APPENDIX I.

It deserves to be here remembered, that an eminent nonconformist teacher instructs his readers, that there were three orders of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, existing for the first time only just at the end of the 3rd century, adding, with an insinuation, of the nature of which, I hope, he will be among the first to be duly sensible, as did other *innovations and corruptions*. (See pp. 87, 88.)

APPENDIX II.

In the latter part of Chapter III. of this volume, we argued, and we trust unanswerably, against the independence of congregations from the doctrine of the unity of the church; observing, that the conclusion to which we arrived was confirmed by Scripture testimony. That testimony is abundantly

supplied by the declaration of St. Paul, that he had "the care of all the churches," (2 Cor. xi. 28); by his commissioning Timothy to preside over the ministers at Ephesus, where we have reason to believe there was a considerable number; and by his delegating a similar power to Titus over the numerous ministry in the different cities of the Island of Crete. These examples, without extending our researches, which might be done with great advantage, amply testify that the pastors and congregations of apostolic times, according to Scripture, were not independent, but were all responsible to apostolic authority. Thus independency, on both the arguments employed in our third chapter, and by the evidence of Scripture, is an unspiritual conceit of the human imagination, if not the natural offspring of human pride.

APPENDIX III.

It may not be unknown to the reader, that it is a rule of some denominations of dissenters to ordain by previous ministers; and it may be asked, in what then do they materially essentially differ in this respect from the church established? The answer, in

brief, is the following:—First, it cannot be truly said, that the new candidates are ordained by the previous ministers. They may certainly undergo the imposition of their hands; but they are not elected and appointed by them. They are called and chosen by the people. The ordination, as it is called, then follows as a matter of course, and is, as Mr. Conder expresses it, a decent sanction of the proceedings of the church; that is, of the congregation. Thus the appointment to the ministry is really vested in the people. Secondly, the ministers, even if they did appoint to the ministry, instead of recognising those who are appointed by others, have, in fact, no right according to Scripture, to admit to the ministerial office on their own authority. For according to Scripture, no ordination is valid which is not, in part at least, performed by one of the successors of the Apostles, like the bishops in our church, and any other system of ordination is a violation of the divine plan of union proposed in Scripture for human observance.

The dissenting minister is therefore not called to preach to separate congregations according to the word of God, and therefore not according to his will. He is called only in his own opinion and by his own feelings.

If any additional evidence were wanted to shew the impurity of the dissenters' ecclesiastical, and particularly their ordaining, system, the reader may be referred in this place to an attentive perusal of the extracts from dissenting writers, recorded in Chap. iv. pp. 42—48. And he may perceive still more, perhaps than at first, the wickedness of congrega-

tionalists in constructing a theory of their own, p. 45; that what they call beautiful in theory, is deformity itself, being a human contrivance in direct opposition to a scheme which is divine; and be saved the necessity of doubt when asking the question, whether churches in which the people and the pastor have completely changed places from the apostolical, can be apostolical, p. 47.

CHAPTER IX.

OTHER OBJECTIONS OF DISSENTERS STATED AND
NOTICED.

It is, by no means, the only objection of dissenters to the Church of England, that episcopacy and prelacy are human devices. If ill-nature herself had undertaken the task of finding every possible fault for the sake of gratifying an envious and malicious spirit, she could hardly have been more successful than the dissenters, in discovering or inventing flaws and imperfections in the national institution. There is not one part of it which has not endured the most severe examination; severe in its intentions to affix blame, though not in its accuracy. The most scandalizing circumstances of the Church of England, in the present day, according to the public sentiments of dissenters, are its connexion with the state, and its twentieth article. It is made also a principal objection, that the primitive churches were voluntary societies, and that our church is not of that description; and a torrent of other accusations is derived from that fertile source of offence, the Prayer-book: to all of which, as far as they can be easily recol-

lected, we will proceed to bestow our attention, in that order which may be most perspicuous.

I. I begin with the twentieth article. Mr. Towgood, in that profound darkness which involved him, in common with the rest of his fraternity, respecting the true theory of episcopacy, has pronounced the twentieth article to be the sole and total difference between the church and dissenters. "It is hoped," says he, p. 37, "that every person who reads the following defence of the principles of the dissenters, will remember, that the only point in dispute between them and the defenders of the established church, is this: whether men are to reason and judge for themselves concerning the articles of faith and the rites and ceremonies of religion, as appointed by Jesus Christ, the only lawgiver of the Christian church: or, whether the church, as by law established, has power to decree rites and ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith." "The controversy may easily be brought to a plain and short issue. It turns upon the single point of the twentieth article of the church," p. 2. It is also alleged against this article, that it "disannuls the right of private judgment." Now, what is this article which thus scandalizes the dissenter? It is as follows:—"The church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies and authority in controversies of faith, and yet it is not lawful for the church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's word written; neither may it so expound one place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore, although the church be a witness and a keeper of holy writ, yet, as it ought not to decree any thing against the same, so besides

the same ought it not to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of salvation."

Surely, in any liberal and candid mind, this declaration of the church might not only pass without vehement censure, but even receive a large share of commendation.

The dissenter's objection in substance is, that God is the only lawgiver; that the church has not authority to determine controversies, nor decree ceremonies; that in these matters the people may use their own discretion. It may first be briefly retorted, that it is not denied, or intended to be denied, that God is the only lawgiver; if by this is signified, that no laws ought to be made which are either not authorised by the letter or spirit of the revelation of His will. Neither is it to be argued, that the church has any authority but such as is derivable from God; but it has such authority, and that is, the authority which the article, as far as it extends, to all intents and purposes, asserts.

The subject naturally divides itself into two branches. The acts which there is authority to perform, and the persons in whom the authority is vested.

The acts specified are, decisions of religious disputes and the appointment of a ritual. And no reasonable man can doubt, that if controversies do arise, it is desirable that they should be composed by such arguments as would convince the heretical of their errors. And equally certain is it, that such rites and ceremonies should be adopted as are agreeable to the will of God. Now, whatever cavils may be raised, respecting the different clauses of the twentieth article, every liberal critic, who is willing

to put the best instead of the worst construction on the intent of the composers of the article, must perceive, intuitively, that in its spirit and substance it signified that the decisions and decrees contemplated were to be as far as possible consistent with revelation. It appears, indeed, to be very evidently designed, that nothing was to be determined by the church as necessary for salvation, which exceeded the authority of Scripture, nor any thing whatever decreed which militated against its literal or spiritual signification. Confining our view to this branch of the subject, we may confidently deny, that there is any ground of fair objection, to the powers which are vindicated as far as they extend. But secondly, with respect to the persons who have authority from the Scriptures to arrange and settle these matters; the article affirms, that it is "the church." Here we are met by the dissenter with a positive contradiction, that the church has any such authority. It might appear from the form of the objection, which denies to the church the right of decision, that men were not to decide in controversies, or to determine what rites and ceremonies are to be instituted at all. But nothing appears more remote than this from the intention of the objectors. They claim the right for every private individual, to depend, in these cases, entirely on his own judgment. The question then comes to this :—whether it is more agreeable to Scripture and to reason, that the authority be vested in every single person, or in a body of individuals, whatever that body may be, which is signified by the church. Now if the body intended be a council of learned and pious divines, it is worthy of observation,

that the principle of the dissenters directly infringes the maxim of the wise man, that in the multitude of counsellors there is safety ; and establishes an axiom of a most fallacious kind, that the opinion of one person speaking generally, is more deserving of attention and respect than the united suffrages of a numerous and learned conference. Upon this sole view of the case, it might, I have no doubt, be very satisfactorily shewn, and it may, I think, be left almost to intuition to remark, that the principle of the church is by much more rational than that of the dissenter. But it will be advisable to pursue our subject a little further in another direction.

To make ourselves masters of the dispute in question, it will be well to bear in mind the contents of Chapters V and VI. And considering the tendency to confusion and error of the private judgment of dissenters as there described, and the design of Providence, that the members of the church should be taught and guided by a ministry ; the first observation which occurs is, that the authority and power, such as it is, resides in the church ministry ; in, we will imagine, some council of the ministerial body. There ought to be ability in the ministers to determine what is agreeable to the divine will in any disputed case. And there can be no question to any one who understands the Scriptures, that the ministry have, theoretically, an authority to make these determinations. It is not insinuated, that the ministry are ever infallible ; it is not imagined for a moment, that the people are not to exercise their own judgment (see ch. vi.) ; it is not denied that the ministry of the church may be in error when they differ from

the people ; and it is not meant, that the ministry have any absolute authority. The only authority, the ministry, as a ministry, enjoy, is that which they derive from that divine charter of their privileges, which, as has been noticed in Chapter the fifth, authorizes them to lead and direct the people. Nor is it meant that their decisions are never to be disputed. But if the people dissent from the ministry, error in opinion would be much less dishonourable on one side than the other. And it is right, in cases of difference, that the doctrines and sentiments, the decisions of the ministry should be true, rather than the people should be placed in the position of their correctors ; and as ministers are teachers by divine ordinance, there ought in principle to be a general presumption in favour of their opinions — but not of course such as to bar investigation. Their decisions are entitled, at least, to respectful consideration ; and their arguments are to be required with some degree of self-diffidence. It must be a becoming modesty in the people to doubt of the accuracy of their own judgment, if they are not fully acquainted with their subject, and if they are opposed by the collective wisdom of the ministerial body. The case of episcopacy alone, which we have examined, may afford that lesson of humility to thousands, who, when they would be teachers, have need that they be taught what be the first principles of an ecclesiastical foundation. Without exceeding the bounds of truth and moderation, we may affirm, that the ministry of a church *ought* to be able to decide controversies, and to determine other inquiries agreeably to a true interpretation of that word, of which

they are the professed and ordained expounders ; that ministers would fail in their duties to which they are designed by God in the Scriptures, if they could not accomplish these professional objects ; and that the church would not be well disciplined as an incorporation, if its teachers were thus incapacitated. Regarding the article merely in this point of view, it only requires for the Church of England, what any church ought to be able to perform. And what arrogance or impropriety can there be in affirming, theoretically, of a church that which according to Scripture is theoretically true ? It is quite evident that some persons ought to be able to decide controversies, to decree ceremonies, and to rule the church according to Scripture. There ought to be, and must be, some judges and rulers in these respects belonging to every true church. They ought and must be found in its ministry. In principle, therefore, the ministry of a church possess authority to determine what is doubtful, and to supply what is deficient. And it is presumptuous in the people, and contrary to Scripture, to assert, as a general and a theoretical proposition, that the power, the authority, resides in them preferably to the ministers ; much more absurd is it to maintain, that it is vested in individuals in preference to a ministerial council. The truth is the reverse of this ; and if this reverse were the signification of the article, it would embody only a most undeniable principle of ecclesiastical polity.

But, agreeably to the rules of fair criticism, we must suppose that the framers of the articles intended by the church, the ministers and the people, in con-

formity with their definition of a church in Article XIX. On this supposition, it is signified, that the power, the authority, to decide according to Scripture, is somewhere resident in the church, in the ministry and the people; and if there be any power in man to decide at all, as the dissenters admit there is, how can it, without contradiction and absurdity, be denied to a church to decide for itself? There ought, in short, to be an agreement between the people and the ministry, and the decree of the council at Jerusalem in the names of the people, as well as of the Apostles and elders, is an example of church authority, very much in point. So little, indeed, can the dissenters, in justice, deny the privilege claimed by the church, that they allow it in matters of discipline, at least, to their own societies. The majority in some matters rule the minority with their consent; they recognize the right of ruling their own bodies. The great difference between them and us being this:—that they rule by a method which has no foundation in Scripture, we by one that is supported by its most undoubted prescription.

If a church errs, or is only thought to err, in any point of doctrine or ceremony, the question then arises, whether any man, or body of men, are justified in separating from her communion, and in what manner the separation should, if justifiable, be effected? This is a question which must be determined on its own merits,—cannot be decided in favour of separation from *the church* in any case,—and is quite independent of the general abstract duty and right asserted in the article.

To conclude: the twentieth article only asserts,

that the church, ministers, and people, if not the ministers alone, have authority to decide agreeably to Scripture; for the sake, no doubt, it was intended, of order and regularity, and for the composure of differences. It may not always decide in that manner. It has, however, authority to do it, and this is all that we are required to concede. And no one can justly condemn the church for its assertion of this authority; if the article includes both ministers and people, it is quite consonant with dissenting principles as to their own societies; if it contemplates the ministers separately, it is perfectly defensible from Scripture, which authorises them in particular to teach, to deliberate, and judge. And so little is condemnation due to the church for the assertion of the disputed power, that, on the contrary, it deserves praise for excluding from its liberties and rights, all licence to establish doctrines or customs on any extraneous principle; such as, for instance, the tradition of the Romish Church, which was probably intended in the cautionary language of its final clause.

II. The next two objections to the church are obtained from what is called the voluntary system and the union of church and state. As these topics are allied, the consideration of them will be brought under one division of our subject. We will first briefly explain the nature of the dissenters' views of voluntarism and of the alliance, and detail the arguments they adduce upon each of these matters, accompanying them with such replies as appear sufficient and conducive to the conclusion, that the charge

advanced against the church is really one of its recommendations.

If there is one feature in the church establishment more offensive to dissenters than another, it is what is usually denominated the union of church and state; that supremacy of the king in all ecclesiastical causes which the church acknowledges to belong to the ruling power of the realm; and that patronage and protection which the government of the country affords to the ministers of one particular christian society, preeminently above all others. The canons and regulations of the church, it is well known, receive the sanction of the legislature before they pass into law. Agreeably to the law of the land, ministers of one class are provided throughout the country, in almost every parish; and are supported by property, from the enjoyment of which all other ministers are excluded. Bishops are nominated by the crown; and pastors of congregations by persons in certain high, civil, and political and ecclesiastical stations; or by the proprietors of estates from which the clerical revenues arise. These things, it is maintained, ought not so to be. They are rocks of offence which have given occasion to the severest condemnation. Again, as to voluntaryism, the idea of it may be formed sufficiently for our present purpose, from the following quotations. "Our grand fundamental laws are, that since religion is a personal thing, and since we are responsible for our belief and practice to God alone, we decline the interference of any human authority, and worship God with those forms, and after that manner which conscience dictates; that faithful men who voluntarily associate

together for purposes of mutual edification, partaking of the symbols of a dying Saviour's love, constitute a church of Christ, that such companies of the faithful, holding allegiance only to the great head of the church, cannot be *commanded by any human power* in matters of doctrine or ceremony; that since their union was voluntary, and for the purposes of mutual edification, they hold within *their own hands* the power of excluding from their society; any members by whom the religious welfare of the entire body is injured, of refusing admission to any with whom they cannot harmonize, and of receiving into their communion those who may help and further their religious prosperity." (Binney's life of the Rev. S. Morell, p. 280.) Again, "A church is regarded by them as a voluntary society of converted and christian men, every such society is complete in itself. Subject to no foreign jurisdiction, competent to make and execute its own laws, acknowledging no rule but Scripture, and possessing the ability to ascertain and comprehend its directions. The minister is chosen by the suffrages of the people. *The voice of the society decides every thing*, for to it *every thing is referred*: any necessary or supposed necessary measure is proposed and discussed, each member is at liberty to express his opinion, the majority determines the matter." (Ibid pp. 134, 135.)

Such is a brief description of the voluntary system, except as to the payment of ministers, an item to be admitted into a subsequent page of our account. As the acknowledging no rule but Scripture, and possessing the ability to ascertain and comprehend its directions, are abstract assumptions of a most

unobjectionable nature, are assumed in common with dissenters by ourselves, and as one object of this work is to show whether we or they do keep that rule and do comprehend its directions, the whole description of the system, that deserves our immediate attention, may be reduced to these two heads:

1. The principle of joining the congregation voluntarily.

2. That each congregation is a church, to be ruled by a majority of its members, independent of all other human authority.

The objection is, that these properties are not inherent in the church. The union of church and state is, in the eyes of dissent, an evil of the first magnitude to be abolished. The system of voluntarism is that boon which is desirable in its stead. The arguments by which both these opinions are supported will come next for examination, under a classification with which in some measure dissent has itself supplied us, after observing:

- 1st. That whatever statutes may remain unrepealed, of a compulsory character, and whatever may be the duty of persons in authority and power, to enforce the observance of the divine laws, it is certainly desirable that men should attach themselves to the church with no more involuntary determination than that which arises from a sense of the most solemn of all obligations, and this is indeed the freedom which men are in these days by the laws of the land permitted to exercise.

And, 2ndly, that the opinion that each congregation is a church to be ruled by a majority of its members,

independent of all human authority, is unscriptural. It is a mode of government not like that prescribed to us in Scripture. This may be seen in our chapter on prelacy. The Church of England is right in this matter. This part of the voluntary system is contrary to the word of God. Prelates are to have authority in churches, and single congregations are not to be separate, and distinct, and independent of human superintendence. (see Ch. viii. § v. App. ii.)

Of the numerous objections to the union of church and state, to which we are now to turn our attention, the first which I shall mention, and which is commonly urged, is—

1st, That the appointment of our bishops is vested in the ministers of the king. “Can a more monstrous, & more unchristian thing be imagined, than that the political party which happens to be in ascendancy should have the absolute command over the very life-power of the church in its primary pastors, who, upon the episcopal system, are the sources of the authority and validity of all the clerical ministrations? The ministry appoints your bishops, and insults your sense and feeling with a *congé d’élire*—with scarcely an exception are not these appointments made from motives, and upon reasons perfectly political and worldly?” (John Pye Smith’s Letter to Lee.) This is hard language—which could only be justified by its truth. It is, in this case, abuse and reviling. There are many things monstrous and unchristian, but the abstract appointment of our bishops by the ministry of the king is not one of them. One however is the whole system of separation from the Church of England, on the arguments

of nonconformity, and another is this very charge of Doctor Smith's, against the church and the royal prerogative. In the first place, it is false that the political party in the state, has the absolute command over the life-power of the church. The rulers of the state do not *create* the ministers of the church. They find ministers made to their hands by the bishops of the church, and what objection is there to their appointing to a bishopric a clergyman of their own political opinions, if in other respects he is well qualified for the office. The mere power of elevating one who is deemed qualified to have the cure of souls, by the church, to any of its highest dignities, can involve no antichristian principle. And as to the insult of a *cong   d'  lire*, I venture to affirm that no virtuous man who understands the transaction, refuses his cheerful acquiescence to its loyalty, without any compromise of religious prepossessions. Call it a dictation. The king has a right to be satisfied that the rulers of the church shall be men in whom he can place confidence. Suppose he makes an injudicious choice in regard to qualifications for the episcopal character; the church, not the advisers of the monarch, is to blame for suffering such a man to continue in its ministry, without using every legal effort to procure to itself, by new enactments, the authority to divest him of his dignity. But the most monstrous and unchristian portion of Doctor Smith's charge, is the defamation contained in its last period. With scarcely one exception, he signifies our bishops are appointed by the ministers of the king from motives and upon reasons perfectly political and worldly. *How* should Doctor

Smith *know* that our bishops are, with scarcely one exception, appointed perfectly on political and worldly motives? He cannot penetrate into the hearts of their nominators. If the bishops of the church were generally ignorant, or immoral, or unchristian men, there might be some colour of pretence for the accusation. It would be harsh and hard judgment, in that case, that the rulers of the state, scarcely with one exception, thought not of any thing else in the appointment of a bishop but his political and worldly reputation and influence. But when our episcopal bench has been generally filled by some of the most learned and able divines that ever adorned any age or nation; when the character of our Apostles for piety and morality (not to speak of their erudition) has generally, with scarcely one exception, continued not only irreproachable, but even highly praiseworthy, to the termination of their lives; how can any man without a fearful deficiency of christian charity as well as consummate presumption, assert or insinuate that they have, with scarcely an exception, been all appointed perfectly on political or worldly motives?

2ndly, Then again, the self-constituted minister goes on: and is not the same principle dominant in the patronage of your church livings? Out of your ten or eleven thousand incumbencies, have you one in which the pastor is appointed in a scriptural way? By the scriptural way he means appointment by the people. His interrogatory is, I trust, sufficiently answered in the foregoing part of this work, with this addition; appointments to our *livings* are made in various ways. Certainly it is not to be expected that Scripture would afford us an example of nomi-

nating to a *benefice*, when benefices were not known. Those who are appointed to incumbencies are made *ministers* in the scriptural way. And as it was not scriptural for the people to choose their own ministers but to receive those who were appointed by the Apostles, nothing more need be said on this particular.

3rdly, Another scandal in the church is the sale of livings. "They are advertised in newspapers, and bought or bartered like stalls in a cattle market." (Pye Smith to Lee, p. 52.) "Let any man who has common sense determine if any thing can be more revolting to the feelings of unsophisticated piety, more opposed to the word of God, or more insulting to the human understanding, than this traffic in church patronage, &c." In casting my eyes over the declamatory passage, which is too long for extraction, and of which the preceding sentence is a fragment, I beheld, "Roman antichrist," "buyers and sellers out of the temple," "Rome," "filthy lucre's sake," "Babylon" and "plagues;" and what grieved, though not astonished me more, the Rev. Thomas Scott's name introduced to certify that the management of church preferments has not been any better than "trafficking in souls." (J. Angell James's *Dissent and Church*, p. 95.) But what are the essentials in this matter? Does the purchase of a benefice constitute a clergyman's *qualification* for the cure of souls? If it did, then he who buys the tithes of a parish might be said, with some plausibility, to traffic in the souls of men. But nothing can be farther from the truth: The qualification for the ministry is perfectly independent of the purchase of the living. Men have

been accounted worthy, in the scriptural way, to be admitted to the pastoral office. They or their friends have possessed property sufficient for the purchase of an advowson or a presentation. The purchase is made. And the minister previously ordained, for whom the tithes have been bought, on the death or the removal of the incumbent, fills the vacancy. What possible objection, in the name of decency, can there be, that a man who is appointed by the church, as one of its ministers, should purchase a stipend which the piety and liberality of our forefathers have assigned to his office, in order to obtain a *permanent* situation (in my mind a most desirable object) where to discharge his religious duties. What is there, I confidently ask, opposed to it in Scripture? For my own part, I frankly avow, without the slightest hesitation, that nothing but the law of the land would ever have prevented me, had I possessed the means and inclination, from being guilty of at least one, or even more articles of that species of offence denominated "simony."

But, 4thly, It is objected, that this commerce is placing the patronage of the church in the hands of the owners of the soil; and of the rich, who are represented in Scripture as least capable of judging in religious matters; this objection is so intimately connected with another which is often made by the more illiterate, that it may be convenient to notice them together. It is frequently insinuated, if not broadly asserted, that the poor may more reasonably be expected to know the way of salvation than the rich: this is one of the arguments pretended to be drawn from Scripture, which are meant to bring con-

tempt on the superior pretensions of the clergy over the ignorant preacher, and calculated to degrade the possessor of elevated rank and station in the estimation of the people. It is recollected that it is written, that "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven," that "the poor have the gospel preached to them, and that not many noble, not many mighty are called," and then it is argued that the above conclusion is evident and just. Doubtless it appears, from the first of our quotations only, that the rich, as rich, are placed in more disadvantageous circumstances as to the reception of the gospel, if delivered to them, than the poor, as poor, if they receive the same true doctrine; but the other passages, so often rung in the ears of the people, are some of the hundreds of instances in which the Scripture of God is perverted by those ignorant pretenders who rush into the office of preacher with licentious and conceited zeal. The religion of the heathens was taught more particularly, in its sublimer mysteries, to the wealthy; it is not improbable that it was with reference to this custom, that our Saviour spoke to signify the excellence of his own dispensation, by intending it equally for rich and for poor. As to the other text, "not many noble, not many mighty are called,"—these are, in fact, not altogether words of Scripture,—the two "are called" being an interpolation; the sentence would have been much more appropriately supplied by the translators, had it been written, not many noble, not many mighty "call you;" that is, the ministers of the gospel were not generally, at that time, found

among the men of worldly influence. And though the mighty and the noble might not then have been converted to the faith in any great numbers, it might be partly accounted for by the want of longer time to overcome their stronger prejudices ; but the truth is, that the great and mighty were converted in the apostolic age, in no inconsiderable proportion to the other classes of the people. And though it must be admitted and proclaimed, that the pleasures and enjoyments of the world are unfavourable to the implantation of piety in the human heart, and require the most jealous caution of those whom they assail with their influence, yet the rich, as educated men, are not so liable as the poor and ignorant to be seduced by false doctrine, and to be made the dupes of every pretender to inspiration. The poor most probably have greatly the advantage over the rich, on the supposition that nothing but truth is preached, but where there is an infinitude of error, there are kinds to which the poor are easier victims. I have thought it advisable to make this brief correction of a popular opinion, because it is involved in the charge against the establishment, which we are considering ; that charge, however, is sufficiently answered by the observations that considerable learning is necessary for the due execution of the ministerial duties, and that such learning cannot be obtained, generally, without expence. That the candidates for the ministry, and therefore the ministers, should be confined to a class who, by charitable benefactions or by private property, possess means above the poor of acquiring knowledge, is the consequence of a very natural state of society which makes the acquisition

of learning expensive, and of the law of God, which makes that learning necessary. Besides which, it must be observed, that the objection is fallacious, in imputing to the proprietors of the soil, the creation of the ministry. They have only to choose from those persons who are scripturally ordained.

But, 5thly, it is necessary to include in these objections, those which strike at the very foundation of establishments. It is contended, that it is indefensible from Scripture that the government of a country should establish one body of christian teachers, in preference to every other denomination. I hesitate not to give this assertion as unqualified a contradiction as any of the preceding ones, by affirming that it is agreeable to the will of God, as far as it is discoverable from Scripture, that the church should be encouraged and promoted by the earthly potentate. The form which the objection assumes, is that establishments are *unscriptural*; and it is sometimes asked, in a tone of triumph, with reference to that objection, whether the churches mentioned in Scripture were national; by which it is signified, that as there are no national establishments recorded in the pages of the New Testament, there ought not to be any instituted, and that they are *unscriptural*, or contrary to the divine intention, as exhibited to us in the volume which is to be our supreme authority. The nature of this argument may be briefly stated in the manner following: that what is not recorded of the governments and the churches in the age of the Apostles, ought not to exist at any time, but that institutions and customs should exactly conform to the precedents in aposto-

lic history ; that what we read in the New Testament is *scriptural*, and what we do not read there is *unscriptural*. The error on which the whole argument proceeds, is a confused and absurd notion of the meaning of the words 'scriptural' and 'unscriptural : ' there are different ways of understanding each of those words ; a fact or a circumstance may be termed scriptural or unscriptural, according as it is related or not in the inspired writings :—this is a sense which seems to be put upon them in some instances, and in the objection which we are examining particularly. Now if it be affirmed that the union of a church with a state is unscriptural, in the sense of the word immediately preceding, it is perfectly true ; but it is not, at the same time, the slightest argument in the world for the supposition that it is contrary to the will of God that there should be such an alliance. Perhaps the most intelligible method of exposing the absurdity of this objection is by ridicule. Let it be observed then, that at the time Christ and the Apostles lived on earth, the governments of the world were, none of them, converted to the christian faith : and the vast majority of the inhabitants of the most enlightened countries were believers in a plurality of gods, and addicted to the abominations of the heathenish religious systems. We read in Scripture of no emperor of Rome embracing the religion of the cross : we are informed of no king renouncing the errors of his national creed. No cheering instance is afforded us of the encouragement of imperial authority extended to the ministers of the new doctrine. The treatment of the magistrate was almost any thing but

the objection to which we are now restricted, relates only to the want of precedent. There is no example of a national establishment : the first churches were not national, and therefore other churches are not to be so. Now the consequence does not follow from the premises. There being no national church mentioned in Scripture, is not a proof or an argument that it would not be pleasing to God that there should be one in after ages, or that it would not have been agreeable to Him, even at the time to which Scripture history refers, unless christians had acted by divine direction in not uniting with a state, or unless a state had so acted in not uniting with the church. If a nation and a government had become christian, and had refused, in obedience to the divine will, to establish the church : or the church, in obedience to the same authority, had refused to unite with a christian government which offered alliance, then, indeed, the want of a precedent would have been most probably binding upon us,—unless there were some peculiar circumstances in the case which distinguished it from our own,—but on no other supposition can it be maintained, that the mere want of precedent is a want of authority. If a christian government or a christian people, mentioned in Scripture, had avoided the union of church and state, this example would not have been binding upon posterity, had we not had reason to believe that they acted by divine authority. To make the example, or rather the want of example, obligatory, authority of that nature, is needed in the production or non-production of the example. And if we have not this authority, the want of example is not valid as a pre-

cedent. Now so far from their being any authority of this kind in the unrecorded establishment of the church in Scripture, matters never reached that point where apostolic authority could be exercised in this respect. The Apostles had no opportunity of affording us, by example, their authority for or against establishments. The fact is, there might well be no national churches; nations, and governments, were none of them christian. If we regard only the absence of a record of an institution of the kind in the New Testament, it is impossible to discern any *positive* ground for the assertion, that it was by divine authority that a national church did not exist. The Apostles saw no christian government and christian nation between which they could have recommended or dissuaded an alliance. For aught we know to the contrary, from what occurred or did not occur, by way of mere example, the non-establishment of a national church arose entirely from there being no christian government, and no christian nation. A national church *was not*, as far as we can tell, because it *could not be*: that it could not be, is a fact. It is a fact, too, that can account for the want of an establishment. It is also not a fact, that God caused the union of church and state not to take place, by his express prohibition. It is going, therefore, farther than facts will warrant, to affirm that it was by divine appointment that a christian government did not unite with a christian people. We can have no reason for saying more, than that there was no such alliance, because it was impossible. And it must be evident, that the history of the conduct of princes of the world, and of nations towards the

church, as recorded in Scripture, is only a history of facts which occurred at the time that Scripture embraces; and that the mere mention, or mere non-appearance of any circumstance in Scripture, is not any argument whatever for its being either pleasing or displeasing to God. There are many facts narrated in Scripture which are hateful in the sight of God; and doubtless many not mentioned there which would be acceptable to Him, if in accordance with his revealed will. Nor can it be supposed that the infidelity and persecutions of imperial Rome, and of the mass of her subjects, could be the sentiments and conduct of kings and people, intended by God for future monarchies and nations to imitate. All that can be alleged, in opposition to the establishment of a church, by the sovereign of a country, from this branch of the argument, is, that the New Testament does not give us an example of the manner in which the kings of the earth would obey the will of God by their patronage of the ministers of the christian church. And this is no argument against its being the will of God that such an example should be afforded in process of time—for there being no example to record in Scripture was not owing to his authority, and happened, as far as we can tell from the facts, only from necessity, because it could not be otherwise under the circumstances of the case. In a word, the non-establishment of a church in the apostolic age is an act left undone by unconverted kings and nations, not by kings and nations acting or forbearing to act by divine inspiration or divine direction, and therefore is no authority for any king or nation. Besides the mere

invisibility of an establishment in the first century, is no more evidence against the agreeableness of such an institution to God, than it would be to argue that because there is no christian king, and no christian nation mentioned in Scripture, that kings and nations should not be christian. And as divine authority is totally wanting in the mere non-existence of the example, we may, in this stage of our inquiry, conclude at least that it is probable that an establishment is agreeable to God, inasmuch as the favour of monarchs to his ministers must be agreeable to him.

But example is not the only mode of conveying instruction. It is possible that some *doctrine* may be contained in Scripture, adverse to the alliance of church and state, revealing the aversion of the Almighty to such a union. Not an atom, however, of such doctrine to that effect can be discovered. Dissenters nevertheless do contend, from some of the positive declarations of Scripture, that it is unlawful for kings to patronize the ministers of the church. One is,—those words of Christ,—“my kingdom is not of this world.” (See John xviii. 36.) If this sentence of our Saviour’s signifies that his ministers are not to be protected and encouraged by the kings of this world, then of course our argument for the establishment of the church is lost; and if it does not bear this signification, to advance this passage, as an objection, is only one of those innumerable acts of persecution with which we have been long so unhappily assailed. And, in good truth, nothing was according to the rational interpretation of our Saviour’s words, much more remote from his intention, than to deny the duty of monarchs to give

their support to his ministers. In order to understand our Saviour's meaning, it will be necessary briefly to consider the circumstances under which his words were uttered. When brought to judgment before Pontius Pilate, he was accused, as one of his principal crimes, of making himself a king, and thus of speaking against Cæsar. (Luke xxiii. 2, 3. John xviii. 33, 36 : xix. 12.) Pilate asked him whether he admitted the charge. Our Saviour does not deny that he is a king, but he says that his kingdom is not of this world. Could any answer be more true or more proper to assure Pilate and the Jews, that Christ was not a pretender to Cæsar's empire, nor a rebel against his authority? Our Saviour's words were spoken in answer to Pilate, who, in consequence of the accusation of the Jews, inquired of him whether he were a king; and their plain and natural purport is, that He was not a king, in the ordinary sense of the regal title, as the Jews in their carnality and malevolence imagined and insinuated; and that he declared the fact, by assuring them of a mysterious truth which they were too blinded to comprehend,—that he was about to establish a kingdom in the minds and hearts of mankind,—that he himself was designed to be a king, to whom all men in the world, high and low, monarch as well as subject, ought to declare a spiritual allegiance, but not in any manner so as to subvert the thrones of temporal kings who, by God, “reign and decree justice.” The accusation of the Jews, and the inquiry of Pilate, appear to have been restricted to Christ's personal pretensions to temporal royalty: and the answer of the Saviour can reasonably be in-

terpreted only in the obvious manner above proposed and so generally received, as a direct reply. Now there is nothing in all this interpretation which in the slightest degree contravenes the encouragement of Christ's ministers by the princes of this world. There is no ground for the idea that our Saviour, contemplated in the words he employed the remotest allusion to the condition of his ministers. They are purely a personal denial of the charge brought against himself of being a rival king of Cæsar, and a sublime assertion of the nature of that empire which he sought to establish over the affections of his rational creatures. It is a gratuitous imagination that the words included any reference to the mode to be employed in converting the hearts of men. The kingdom which he designed to establish was heavenly, and it was not to be established in hostility to the monarchs of the earth. This is all in substance that can fairly and reasonably be understood from the words, considering the occasion on which they were spoken, and the object to which alone they appear to have been directed. To apply them, therefore, as an argument against the promotion of the Christian ministry by the temporal sovereign, is irrelevant and impertinent.

It is again contended that the illegality of kings to establish a church is deducible from those words of our Lord. "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and to God the things which are God's." This sentence has been thus commented upon by the dissenter: "In this language he lays down a distinction between the province of Cæsar and of God, and teaches that matters of civil government

belong to the former ; but matters of religion to the latter. In civil affairs man is amenable to civil government, but in the affairs of religion to God only. This comprehensive fundamental maxim of the Bible, &c." (James, p. 29.) These observations are much too general, in their application to the text before us. It cannot properly be called a comprehensive and fundamental maxim, nor can it be said that our Saviour was *laying down* a distinction or inculcating a direct lesson on the prerogatives of the civil magistrate ; much less can it be pretended that it is opposed to an alliance of church and state. A short examination of the words will justify this censure and elucidate the meaning of their speaker. (See Matt. xxii. 15, &c.) The Pharisees desired to detect our Saviour in most probably some treasonable language against the Roman Emperor, to whom the Jews were tributary, that they might be able to lay an accusation against him before the governor. They inquired of him, it is written, for the purpose of ensnaring him in his answer, whether it was lawful for the Jews to pay tribute to Cæsar. The words under consideration are his reply. One of the most obvious remarks to which this answer gives occasion is the admirable adroitness with which our Saviour evades the designs of his interrogators. And the sentence being spoken in immediate reply to a question, it is reasonable to interpret it in direct reference to that question ; and the insidious nature of the question being satisfactorily ascertained, it is also reasonable to understand it as an extrication from the particular difficulty in which they intended him to be involved. The appropriate purport therefore

of our Saviour's words signifies that he did not prefer claims, and institute a religion which were opposed to the rights of the temporal monarch, that he required men to do their duties to both God and the king, which duties he recognized as, in some respects at least, distinct—that he enjoined obedience to himself or to God, but this obedience was not inconsistent with a dutiful allegiance to the king, which he also enjoined. This is all the words can essentially or substantially, in general terms, import. It is going farther than the occasion warrants, to suppose that he intended them primarily and directly as a general maxim for kings, if he did so intend them for their subjects. In their primitive signification besides their evasion of the subtlety of his enemies, they refer only to the duties of those inquisitors to whom he delivered the precept. It is indirectly that we are instructed in the power and the privileges of the king, and then only so far as that his prerogative is not to conflict with the obedience which his subjects owe to the king of kings. If, then, there is no authority assumed by the magistrate, which encroaches in idea on the sovereignty of God, there is nothing in these words opposed to its exercise. And if a monarch only performs that part towards the ministers of the church of Christ, which is calculated to give them advantage as the ambassadors of his spiritual kingdom; if he only promotes the religion of Christ, as a human instrument, by favouring its teachers, the duties of the people to the king and to God are not on that account kept less distinct than they are contemplated in our Saviour's precept. The precept is no argument against the abstract duty of kings, to

promote Christianity by all lawful means in their power; against the mere establishment of the christian ministry; or, admitting the justness of Mr. James's observations on the text, as far as regards their comprehensiveness and generality, they are evidently of no weight as objections to the patronage of the ministers of Christ, by the rulers of this world, if they do not arrogate any of that authority which belongs to God. Against the mere general establishment of Christianity, by a temporal power, the plantation and nurture of Christian ministers throughout its dominions (for that is the point now in debate) the observations are evidently irrelevant, because it cannot be pretended that to favour in this manner the ministers of Christ can be usurping the divine sovereignty. I have not to learn that it is insinuated by the dissenter, that the king of England does entrench in principle on the supremacy of the Most High; but our question, under this head, simply regards the establishment of Christianity in the abstract; and against this establishment, even according to the interpretation, which we have given, of our opponents, the words of our Saviour do not militate, and much less so if we adopt that interpretation to which they are most strictly to be confined.

It must be noticed that Mr. James has, agreeably to the common mistake, fallen into one directly false statement in our last quotation. It is not true that men in religious matters are amenable to God *only*. They are in Scripture represented as also amenable to the ministry, and to the church in general. (See Chap. V. and VIII. § 5.)

A third argument from Scripture against the

establishment of a christian church by the government of a country, is taken from Matt. xx. 25, 26. Our Saviour said to his Apostles, "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister." I think it will be a sufficient elucidation of this passage, to remark that our Saviour spoke in correction of the emulation of the Apostles. They contended among themselves which should be the greatest. Our Saviour could not intend, as we have already seen in other parts of this volume, that the Apostles were not to be superior to other ministers, or to the people, in any sense whatever of the term. He must mean something else. The Apostles, in all probability, were expecting the erection, under the Messiah, of a temporal kingdom, and some of them were desirous of preeminence in that establishment. Our Saviour, in fact, discourages ambition of a worldly nature, and teaches them a lesson of humility in that respect. And if it can be argued with justice, that *because* our Saviour inculcated a spirit of christian humility, and discountenanced emulation of greatness among christians, and his ministers in particular, and taught that true grandeur does not consist in worldly distinctions, *therefore* the church of Christ is not to be patronized and encouraged by earthly potentates,—then of course establishments are contrary to the will of God as declared in the Scripture; yet who can, with any show of reason, maintain that kings are not to establish the christian ministry in their dominions, because Christ diverted

the attention of his ministers from ambition of worldly superiority?

A fourth objection to the establishment of the church of Christ, is one which is, I think, too absurd to require the slightest exposure beyond its simple statement. "When the multitude would have taken Christ by force to make him a king, he refused to accept of temporal royalty." (James, p. 29.) I leave it to happier inventions to discover how it follows, from its not being a part of Christ's design in coming into the world to be made himself the supreme magistrate of a nation, that kings are not to patronise his ministers by locating them among their subjects.

Such are the objections of dissenters, drawn from Scripture, to the establishment of Christianity by the governments of nations, and such is their intrinsic insignificance. And while there really is nothing in the revealed will of God opposed to the patronage of the church of Christ by the temporal powers, its acceptableness to the Supreme Being is deducible from several of its declarations. It is no inconsiderable argument in favour of a national institution of christianity, that one church, instituted by God in a nation, was certainly endowed and established coextensively with the nation for whom it was designed. The system of an establishment cannot be pronounced, in its principle and practice, totally displeasing to God, because in one of his few dispensations he has caused it to be adopted. This is indeed a strong presumption in favour of its being agreeable to his will in another instance, when a nation is disposed to endow and establish the ministry of a

religion which he originates and designs for mankind. And it is no objection to this presumptive argument, that Christianity was not established similarly to the Jewish religion in the first instance; as the ruling authorities of a nation, and the nation itself, were not even prepared, at the time of its being instituted, for its reception. This view of the case is much strengthened by the reference which is occasionally made in the New Testament to certain appointments under the Old, as precedents and authorities; particularly in a passage where St. Paul enforces some mode of supporting the ministers of Christ by the question, "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? say I these things as a man, or saith not the law the same also?" (1 Cor. ix. 7, 8.) But there are not wanting two or three texts virtually appropriate: I allude especially to certain prophetic passages in the book of Isaiah; as for instance most particularly to that contained in verses 22 and 23 of chap. xlix., "Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers." This is certainly predicted of the people, as a church, under the christian dispensation; and what may be foretold of any portion of that church, with the evident approbation of God, cannot be believed to be, in principle, adverse to the divine economy respecting any other department of it. The mode of nurture is not prescribed: it is left open. But if any monarch on the earth finds his people disposed to make a large and constant pecuniary provision for the ministry to the church of Christ, and is himself inclined to disperse that ministry through every district of his realm, to labour under his patronage and protection,

for the eternal welfare of his subjects ; who can, with reason, imagine that he is not performing his duty to God in making his sovereign authority thus subservient to the diffusion of religious truth ? (See Note O.)

It ought not to be omitted, that the most celebrated nonconformists of former times, Owen, Henry, Alleine, and others, were friendly to an establishment, and maintained the duty of the government to support the christian church. Also that missionaries of that sect which is most clamorous for the separation of church and state, have lately promoted the alliance in one country. (See Note P.) It cannot therefore be the abstract confederacy of the church with the political powers, to which they entertain their insuperable objections.

But, 6thly, it is said that the establishment of the church is unreasonable,—unfounded in right and expediency.

“The supreme legislative body may err ; the exertion of its power might possibly be unjust or oppressive. It does become unjust whensoever it interferes with the unalienable rights of men as moral beings, more especially when it infringes upon that ‘highest natural right, the right of conscience.’ The judgment of the legislature, as to its own acts, does not make them salutary or morally expedient ; yet, with regard to ecclesiastical establishments, this is the very point to be ascertained. Is the interference of the magistrate in matters of religion (as in establishing the episcopal church) consistent with the rights of conscience ? or is it justifiable on the ground of expediency ? Dissenters are apt to look

upon it as objectionable on both these grounds." (Conder, pp. 254, 255.) If it is the right and the duty of governors to make their religion the religion of the state, then the supreme magistrate in Pagan and Mahomedan countries, is justified in establishing his religion, though a false one. Such appears to be an argument of Mr. Conder's. This is plainly stated by other writers. "If the right to establish be conceded to magistrates, as arising out of their office, it cannot be yielded to christian rulers, and denied to those who are Pagan and Mahomedan." (Ecclesias. Establishment Indefensible, J. B. Innes.) "If the obligation of the monarch to provide a religion for the people rests on his regal relation, then it is the duty of *all* sovereigns to do this, and the sultan of Turkey must establish Mahomedanism, the emperor of China, Paganism, and the emperor of Austria, Popery." (James, Dissent and Church, p. 30.)

These objections may be simplified and reduced to the following heads:—

1st. That if it is the duty, generally, of the supreme magistrate to establish his own religion, then in different countries it would be right to establish false religions.

2ndly. For a government to establish one religion is oppressive, as it may err: and the act of establishing is a violation of the rights of conscience.

3rdly. The establishment of religion is inexpedient.

As to the first of these objections, it proceeds on an absurd assumption. It is not to be imagined that every sovereign has a right, or is under an obliga-

tion, of establishing his own religion, for the very reason because it may be extremely false and abominable; and it cannot be his duty to maintain that which is to be so characterised. The advocate of truth would act unwisely if he asserted the general proposition: I take the liberty of doubting whether any episcopalian ever did assert it. I rather suspect it was unreasonably supposed to be a consequence of our own doctrines, and was raised as an objection by the dissenter for the pleasure of effecting its demolition, imagining that it involved the ruin of our argument. But whether the idea originated with churchman or sectarian, it is most irrational. All that is to be contended for is, that it is the duty of the monarch to be christian, and being christian, it is his duty to establish the church of Christ in his dominions in the best possible form, with the ministry most agreeable, in its ordination and doctrines, to God's will as revealed in his word; and to promote in that ministry and church, as far as his authority and sanction are available to that end, every improvement of which it may be capable.

With regard to the second head. It is true that governments may err in establishing a church, and that establishments may be oppressive and infringements on the liberty of conscience; but we are not contending for the duty or the right of government to err in establishing a church. We maintain only, that if a church exists which resembles closely the model designed by the divine architect, and is superior to all others in that respect, it is that which ought to be established in a kingdom, though it may be, at the same time, to be conformed, according to

circumstances, more exactly to the original. The mere fact of establishing a church, if it is such as it is the duty of all the people to unite with, can be no violation of private rights. The establishment of such a church is all that we advocate.

It may be useful in this place to refer the reader to a few short observations on conscience, in pages 65, 66. No one can protest too vehemently against compelling a man to act contrary to his conscience, by any other force than that of truth. But those who clamour most loudly for the rights of conscience, would do well to consider, that the implicit compliance with that monitor has been the cause of much of the variety of error in the religious world; that to assert the supremacy of conscience as a guide, is to advocate some of the most ungodly opinions prevalent; the denier of the atonement; the impugner of the operations of the Spirit; the unbeliever of the Scriptures; all, generally speaking, are under the direction of that idolized creation of the mental powers. It seems as if to this, in some men's opinion, all things were to bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth; whereas, in truth, the consciences of men are often in most fearful need of partial reform, if not an entire revolution.

As to the third objection, an establishment of such a kind as we have contemplated, can never be, properly speaking, inexpedient.

7thly. The next objection to be mentioned against establishments of a true christian church, in general, is, that they are unnecessary.

It is generally asserted by dissenters, that the

establishment of a church in a nation is unnecessary for the support and spread of religion ; that the people might be advantageously left to their own exertions, both for the procurement of ministers and their maintenance. And appeals, in proof, are made to the success of Christianity in the first two centuries, and to the evangelization of North America. (See James, p. 36, and Dissenting Publications *passim*.)

These arguments are fallacious. The success of Christianity in the two first centuries, was to be attributed, in great measure, to assistances and means which it does not now enjoy ; and its success was not so great, but that it might probably have been increased under a well-regulated establishment, to which the people were prepared to pay due deference. And, secondly, the state of America presents much rather than an objection to an establishment, arguments in its favour, — for religion fares but miserably in the absence of an established church ; (see Note Q.) ; and if a church to be established there, were one founded on a scriptural basis, holding forth the pure words of life, (when we are arguing for an establishment generally, it is evident we are at liberty, and ought to advocate only an institution of this description,) and if it were respected as it ought to be by the people, it is indisputable that this would be a great improvement in the condition of America, as to its religious economy.

With regard to the voluntary procurement of a ministry, it is a generally acknowledged absurdity to imagine that the ignorant and corrupt mass of mankind, for whom the ministry of the gospel is most

serviceable, would, if ministers were not provided for them, seek them for themselves: it cannot be expected even of the most educated and polite. It is idle to draw any inferences in favour of a voluntary system pervading the population of the earth from this country, or even America itself, because it is impossible to deny that voluntarism, in both nations, does not owe much of the orthodoxy and influence which it enjoys to the tradition and the example of the episcopal and established church; but at all events man needs to be sought. It is not to be expected that men, in their natural state, with a spirit of worldliness, and in ignorance of the Scriptures, should seek a ministry from religious motives. It is rather according to the will of God that the ministry should seek *them*.

To this it may be added, that when we are arguing for an establishment, we advocate the best that can be devised. Now experience shows us, that if men were left to their own voluntary choice, this establishment would not be procured; but fallacies and diversities of almost all kinds would overrun the earth.

The voluntary maintenance or payment of a ministry, will come most opportunely for consideration under the head of tithes.

8thly. Another general objection is, that to establish a church is to require the assistance of secular power, and that that which requires this assistance, cannot be divine. (James, p. 28, L. S. E. Letter xii. p. 311, third edition. See a quotation from Mr. Scales, with Mr. Gathercole's observations.)

It may be remarked, that if the protection of a

government to a religion is any proof of its human origin, the dissenters share with churchmen in the obloquy due to such political intervention. The argument is, if true, not a little against dissenters as well as churchmen. The dissenters, as dissenters, are protected by the laws; their endowments are secured to them by their authority; adjustments of disputes are referable to the executive; and the peaceable performance of their religious ceremonies leans on the same secular arm. But to examine the objection on its own merits: if, by requiring or needing assistance, it were meant, that were a church not able to subsist without the protection of the state, that that could not be the true church which was most in accordance with the design of the Almighty, there might be some truth in the allegation. It is not here intended that the establishment is *necessary* to the existence of a true church, and to its continuance. Arguments, however, might substantiate the opinion that it *is* necessary, since the abstraction of miraculous powers, particularly the desolation of the christian temples in lands which formerly were enlightened with christian truth. All that is signified is, that the patronage of a government is or ought to be an assistance, a means of advancement; that human agency is to be employed, and that this is one of its modes. It may be farther remarked, that it is impossible, in the nature of things, but, as the kingdom of the church is not of this world, that in a country where the true church is, it must be there at the sufferance of the government. The government must be supreme: it may either repress or promote the church. And the favour of a government

must be more desirable and commendable than its opposition: no wise man can condemn a true church for being protected and encouraged by the state, nor the state for aiding and abetting by its countenance, the most strenuous exertions and best laid schemes for the widest extension of the spiritual kingdom.

9thly. Another allegation which partakes of the nature both of an objection to establishments in general, and to the Church of England in particular, concerns their inefficiency. As far as regards the general part of the question, it is asked, What have the Catholic establishments done in all the states of Europe that are connected with the papacy? To say nothing of impiety, have they kept out infidelity? or to speak of protestant countries, what have establishments done for them? for Germany, Switzerland, Russia, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland? (James, p. 37.) It may be answered in the first place, that the question before us, whether the Church of England ought to be established and adhered to in this country, does not at all concern what may be the acts of government in other countries,—more particularly is it no part of our system to defend an establishment of a papistical church. In the next place, let it, if possible, be calculated how much more practical knowledge of religion there is in any country than there would have been, had there been no establishments in the world: this will show the good which establishments have done for that country. But this is not the proper and complete test of an establishment, as will be seen when we come to consider the objection of inefficiency as applicable to that of our own nation.

10thly. From the general objections to all establishments, we now descend to such as are made to the English and Irish establishment in particular. "To come to our own empire, what has an establishment done for Ireland? How much has it left undone for England and Wales? What would have been the condition of the neglected population of this kingdom at the present moment, but for the labours of the dissenters and methodists?" (James p. 37.) "We object to all ecclesiastical establishments, on the ground of their utter inefficiency." (J. Davies's Address on Eccl. Establishments, p. 36.)

These sentences are some of the innumerable instances of misjudgment with which the pages of dissenting writers abound. There is scarcely a more unreasonable act of the human mind, than to condemn an institution merely for the little good which it may have produced, and to judge of the excellence of it always by its effects, without regarding its fitnesses and tendencies. That which has occasioned the greatest possible benefit, if the direct result of its legitimate action, may be safely pronounced excellent merely from observation of its operations. But it is no proof that there may not be the highest degree of inherent perfection in an instrument which has failed of producing the utmost or even any service to mankind. It is assumed or argued by dissenters, that the establishment of the church in England must be an evil because there is much good unaffected by it among the people. We deny that it follows from that circumstance that the establishment is not deserving of universal, though not unqualified approbation. The principle of such

an objection is absurd, as one example will demonstrate. The gospel of Jesus Christ would be the means of saving all the inhabitants of a country where it is preached, and, as many Christians believe very truly, is calculated for the purpose of the salvation of the world; yet how small a proportion of the people of any one nation which has heard the evangelical tidings, are probably converted truly to the christian faith. On the principle that it had left much undone, it might be argued that the gospel was objectionable and evil by reason of its inefficiency: yet who but a blasphemer would ever utter or entertain such an opinion? And yet, again, this would be an argument on exactly the same principle as that against our church, merely because it has not done all the good possible, without considering its adaptation to the purpose of evangelizing the nation; and our application of the kind of argument to the case of the gospel has shown, I trust, sufficiently its unsoundness.

So again of the objection that is often made to the church by a pretended or real want of success resulting from the preaching of its ministers. Admitting that the influence of the doctrines of the clergy were as partial and inconsiderable as our opponents in their ignorance imagine, they might on the same principle, though with much more injustice, have addressed their Saviour, had they witnessed his ministry, with taunts of unfitness for his office, and the want of divine blessing on his exertions, as they produced but little effects upon multitudes of his hearers, and of the people among whom he laboured.

The establishment has left much undone, it is true; nevertheless, the excellence of the institution may be tried on its own merits, and if the establishment is on the whole that church which is most agreeable to the designs of the Almighty, the cause of its inefficiency is to be sought, in part at least, elsewhere than in the ministrations of its members. There may have been, as there probably always will be, more or less of imperfection in those who dispense the word of God, and it may be partly owing to this cause that the beneficial effects produced by the church have not been more extensive; but if the established church is that to which all the people of the country ought to belong, notwithstanding its imperfections, it is in part also attributable to the perverted judgments, and the pernicious doctrines, which are fruits of the licentiousness of independence, that the people have not been more intimately and more generally connected with the established ministry. The inefficiency of the church, very much like the inefficiency of the gospel, is referable to the blindness and perverseness and evil disposition of men; and thus, when they tell us of the good which remains unperformed, they proclaim in great measure the shame of the people who have sought out their own inventions, and refused to attend to its wholesome counsels. It is in fact the dissenting principle of private judgment which is the reprehensible cause, to a great degree, of the very inefficiency of which its professors complain. It is the propensity to depend entirely on that exercise of the conscience which has been followed by all the schisms, nominally christian as well as infidel, with which the kingdom is lacerated

and dismembered. Nor can it be reasonably doubted that the historical and practical unbeliever is often encouraged in his infidelity, by observing the professors of Christianity so confident in their opinions, and yet so discordant, that he believes truth is not to be found in the religion of the Bible, and that he is equally or more likely to be in the right than any of their jarring and conflicting sects. No more effectual and scarcely a more direct method can be taken of publishing the infatuation of men, than by vociferating the inefficiency of an established church which is founded on divine principles, and holds the vital doctrines of the Scripture, "so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." (Art. VI.) For had men but *attached themselves to it in truth, there would have been much more Christianity in the land than exists at the present moment*; and when it is demanded what *would* have been the state of the country, but for the exertions of the methodists and dissenters, a question is asked which it is not possible to answer. What *might* have been its state, is evident. It *might* have been united in one of the purest forms of church that ever were established in the world. It *would* not have been corrupted with those evils which are briefly alluded to in our fourth chapter, as contrasted with the unity designed by God, and described in the chapter preceding. And all that is good in the religion of the land might have been attained without most of its impurities; and not only so, but the church itself might have been advanced,

by mutual cooperation, to high degrees of perfection. That such a state of things does not exist, is greatly ascribable to a false principle of private judgment, which has brought in all the deviations from the Scriptures now prevailing in the realm, and accounts largely for the inefficiency of the establishment; and that it *might* have existed, is one of the inseparable marks of excellence in the structure of the ecclesiastical system. If the same observations be applied to Ireland, the same consequences will follow, either in higher or lower degree, as the evils of popery are greater or less than those of protestant nonconformity and infidelity. (See Note R.)

11thly. It is objected farther, with some semblance of the solemnity of the most sacred truth, that "the Church of England is really a parliamentary church; it is not properly an ally, but a *mere creature* of the state. It depends *entirely* upon the acts and authority of parliament for its very *essence* and *frame*. The church of Christ is a religious establishment founded upon the Scriptures as the only authentic rule of its doctrine and worship; the Church of England is a civil establishment founded upon acts of parliament *as the only authentic rule of what is to be believed and practised therein*; the one a spiritual structure, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; the other *a political structure, built upon the foundation of the Lords and Commons of the realm, the king the supreme head being the chief corner stone*. The Church of England and the Church of Christ seem to be two societies, *absolutely distinct and of a quite different constitution, as they have two different*

heads or fountains whence all authority, jurisdiction, and ministrations in the two churches severally spring." (Towgood, pp. 10, 17, 22.)

If it were not considered that ecclesiastical laws were enacted by the government at the solicitation of the church itself, it might appear that it was directed in great measure by parliamentary authority ; but even in that case, nothing surely can more evince the ignorance and the prejudice (I will not add, the malignity) of dissenters, than the propagation and reception for truth of such palpable falsehoods as those which I have just transcribed. Much of the shamefulness of the declamation might be observed by reference to the general doctrines and articles of the church, particularly that which disclaims the necessity of any faith or practice for salvation but such as may be proved by the authority of Scripture ; but I think it necessary only to recal to the recollection of my readers the contents of the preceding pages for a proof that the Church of England is founded on the Scriptures, on the Apostles, and on Christ ; while the system of separation is built not on that foundation, but on the foundation, at the best, of human and erroneous opinion.

With respect to the assertion that the king is the head of the church, in opposition to Christ, or in his stead, one cannot without some little difficulty believe it possible that the utterer of that sentiment, Mr. Towgood, was not conscious that he was fabricating, to call it by the mildest term, a deliberate exaggeration. It is probably only a glaring instance of the delusion of a partial education. In an episcopal church there must of necessity be a presiding

authority on earth, professing and exhibiting submission and obedience to the supreme legislator. Such is the temporal rule of the church vested in the British monarchs. It is impossible, as we have before observed, that a church should not in some degree be dependent on the government of the state. It is but a proper retribution for the favours of the monarchy, that it should possess the power, by consent of the church, of preventing the enactment of any ecclesiastical laws prejudicial to the national interests. And so long as it refrains from undue interference in the proposal of doctrines or of practices, but merely exercises the privilege of executing that which the church is justified in desiring, and of rejecting that which may be detrimental to the state, there is no objection to the operation of its supremacy; it is in fact a blessing of great price. A presidency of this nature, which is all that in principle we intend, would, if generally obeyed by the people, present such a noble specimen of concurrence with the ministry of the church as was never exhibited in the world. The most exalted and the most humble persons in the land would all be leagued together in one fellowship, and the decrees of the church would go forth with far more universal unanimity than those which emanated from the Apostles at Jerusalem in their own names and in that of their followers.

12thly. A most serious objection appears to lie in the revenues of the establishment. They operate, say the dissenters, as a tax, and are thus unjust.

Dissenters "are compelled by the state to contribute to the propagation of what they conscientiously regard as error. A portion of the fruits of their

industry is diverted to maintain in influence and splendour, the ministers of (it may be) a false religion; for on the same principle that contributions of the nation are demanded in support of any one system, because it is the religion of the state, they may be exacted for the maintenance of any other system, be it Christian or Mahommedan, or the worship of Juggernaut himself. Here then arises a question of religious duty, which may be put in this form: How would the Apostles and first Christians have acted, had they been called upon to contribute to the support of the Roman establishment?" (Conder, pp. 282, 283.)

These are sentences which, like so many others in dissenting publications, abound with fallacies. First, it is not true that the principle upon which the people of this country are called upon to support the Church of England, is that of its being merely or principally the religion of the state. It is because it is the church most scriptural in its foundation and structure. It is also wise and righteous in the government of the country to have selected this apostolical church for its protection and encouragement; and the patronage of the government to the truly divinely constituted and evangelical ministry of Christ is an additional reason for adhering to and supporting the institution of a church to which such a ministry belongs, as its friends are at the same time maintaining allegiance to the kingly authority, and obedience to an ordinance of God. But by far the most powerful motive for attachment to the ministry of the church is its accordance with Scripture. It is, in short, the sole *fundamental* principle

of conformity. The principle thus briefly stated excludes all allusion to false religions, as Mahometanism and the worship of Juggernaut, as absurd to the last degree, and renders it perfectly unnecessary to inquire what the Apostles might have done had they been required to contribute to the support of the Roman establishment; though the answer would probably be, whether pagan or papal Rome be intended, that they would not have felt themselves at liberty to refuse tribute to Cæsar, and would have been most sedulously intent on converting him to a knowledge of the truth.

Not to examine rigorously into every absurdity of the passage, I will only observe, that if by the dissenters being compelled to contribute, and a portion of the fruits of their industry being diverted, is meant the payment of tithes, this is a false representation of facts,—as false as many of the interpretations of Scripture which its self-constituted teachers put forth to the unconsciously misguided people. Fees paid to the clergy for the performance of religious ceremonies may be said to be compulsory contributions, and diversions of the fruits of industry; but these, it is well known, amount but to very trivial sums compared with those dues of the church denominated tithes. But to call these the contributions of dissenters, and a portion of the fruits of their industry, is one of the grossest deceptions that were ever palmed upon the populace. The tithes are not the property of the people at all, and never were their property since their first institution. They were a gift of the proprietors of the soil, several hundreds of years ago, to the clergy for their

benefit and use, and have since been appropriated to them by the law of the land. To call them public property may serve the purpose of provoking the uninformed multitude to lift their voices against the present disposal of them, but places the clamourer in the dilemma of either ignorance or dishonesty. Neither are the tithes of this country taxes upon the people. The tithes of England are taxes upon the land; they are a portion of the produce of the soil, and they do not, in fact, proceed from the pockets of the people, who pay them as a part of their property. The tithes are a portion, and it deserves to be well noted, a *fixed* portion, a tenth, of vegetable produce which belongs, by virtue of the donation of our ancestors, to the clergyman; and when a man hires or buys a farm, he knows, or is extremely and inexcusably ignorant if he does not know, that the tithes of the land do belong to the clergyman; and it is his duty both to the clergyman and himself to make his bargain for the land which he is about to hire or buy in such a way, as to allow the clergyman the full value of his tithe, and so that he may be able to pay him his due without injustice to himself. And I have no hesitation in saying, that the occupier or the purchaser of land ought always to have made his contracts accordingly; and that though it is most probable that the tithes of the church are not of divine appointment, any otherwise than as they may be believed to be sanctioned by divine approbation, yet that they are, in fact, so founded in justice and piety, that the opposition which has been raised against them might have been in great measure avoided, if bargains for land had been duly nego-

ciated ; and that much of the hostility to which they have been exposed, is far from creditable to the religion of the nation : but that tithes are to be considered, as to their value in money, a portion of the fruits of the industry of either churchman or dissenter, is a fabrication, for they are the property of none but the clergy ; and to give it out, that dissenters or any other persons are compelled to *contribute* to the support of a ministry, by paying to the ministry what is its own, is an untruth of a highly injurious tendency.

As to these payments being made for the support of what dissenters *conscientiously* regard as error, it can be no hardship on them to pay the clergyman his own property, even if the consciences of dissenters had been monitors, not of error, but of truth. Neither is there the slightest foundation in justice, to deny the obligation of the majority to discharge its debts to a minority, even if it be true that churchmen are outnumbered by their opponents.

Again, it is recorded by the philosophical dissenter, "As in civil affairs, according to the principles of the British constitution, taxation without representation is tyranny ; so in religion, compulsory payments to a church from which we conscientiously dissent, is of the nature of persecution, and the exclusive patronage of the state of one sect is injustice." (Binney's Address, p. 33.)

The simile has more of sound than propriety. As to the persecution of being compelled to make payments to the ministers of the Church of England, enough has already been said, I trust, to show that there can be no persecution in compelling one body of men to pay to another what is the property of that

other. And if one body of christians is that which is most in conformity with the divine institution, it can be no injustice in the government, but is rather its duty, to patronise their church with peculiar favour. To denominate that body "a sect," which has preserved its fidelity to the Scriptures in the greatest purity, and for one so to style it, who has broken the bond of union, is at once an offence against truth and decency. (See Note S.)

Another writer denies the *prescriptive* right of the clergy to tithe. He maintains that tithes were taken by act of Parliament from the Roman Catholics, and given to the Protestants, and that therefore all *prescriptive* right vanishes. (Cobbett's Legacy to Parsons.) I should deem it quite a sufficient reply to this argument to observe, that tithes were bestowed on the episcopal church, and that the government of the country would be justified in confining them to the branch of that church which far exceeds, in purity, any other establishment of episcopacy within the limits of its jurisdiction; but it will be more pertinent to rejoin, in the words of Hume,—a man not to be suspected of partiality for any christian institution,—that at the last time the church was reformed from popery to protestantism, the number of bishops had been reduced to fourteen by a sickly season which preceded, and all these, except the bishop of Llandaff, having refused compliance, were degraded from their sees; but of the inferior clergy throughout all England, where there are near ten thousand parishes, only eighty rectors and vicars, fifty prebendaries, fifteen heads of colleges, twelve archdeacons, and as many deans, sacrificed their livings

to their consciences. (Elizabeth, chap. xxxviii. vol. v.) (See Note T.)

So certain is it that the love of money is the root of all evil, and that the property of the church is, in fact, the envy of its enemies, that an eminent dissenter writes : " I know that there are some, and those persons of unquestionable moral excellence, and who would abhor any violation of what is strictly just, who recommend the assumption of the church property by the government, as a part of the desired reform." (Pye Smith's Letter to Lee, p. 55.) I take the liberty of very seriously doubting the moral excellence of such men. It is but justice to the same writer to add, that he immediately goes on : " This, to my apprehension, would be downright robbery. May our country never be dishonoured by it." It is a certain fact, that rich individuals, not the government, left the tithe property to the clergy, and that therefore government has no right to take away what it neither gave nor lent.

Another objection to tithes is, that at the first no specific sum was exacted, no kind of compulsive authority employed; the Apostles contented themselves with simply appealing to the generosity, the gratitude of believers. " If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" (Conder, p. 290); by which it is signified, that the ministers of our day ought to be supported in the same manner, as being that which is prescribed in Scripture. This is that part of the *voluntary* system, with respect to the maintenance of ministers, of which I determined to speak under the head of tithes.

At the first, doubtless, things were so. It is the mode of payment mentioned in Scripture ; and it is the mode which was undoubtedly agreeable to the will of God, under the circumstances of the times when nations had not become christian, and had not endowed the church permanently. The owners of landed estates have, since the time of the Apostles, devoted the tithes of their property in the soil to the clergy of the episcopal church. This transfer of property was not made to them in the apostolic age, and therefore we read not of it in the New Testament. And the same kind of observation may be made here, as in the case of establishing a church. If it had been by an express command of God, or in any way by his authority, that the land-owners did *not* settle for ever the tenth of the produce of the soil on the church ministry, then indeed the will of God would have been declared to be in opposition to such a settlement. But an express declaration of the divine will was not made on the subject in the New Testament, nor was it in consequence of any revelation of that will, that the ministers of the church were not endowed in the times of which the New Testament contains the history. The real cause that tithes were not bestowed on the clergy, was that the nations of the earth had not been converted to the christian faith. The great majority of the wealthy were votaries of the heathen superstitions, and did not of course meditate the endowment of ministers of what they deemed a false religion ; and if a few converts to christianity were disposed to such an act of beneficence, the government, being also heathen, would not have secured

the possession of the grant by a legal enactment. In short, though we do not see the record of a settlement of tithe on the ministry of the church in the pages of the New Testament; yet the fact that tithes were not instituted, arose not from the will of God being declared against them, but from the want of disposition or ability in man, and is therefore no authoritative precedent for the imitation of subsequent generations. We are at liberty therefore to pursue our reflections on this subject, without imagining that the non-existence of tithes in the apostolic ages, was a sign of divine aversion to their institution.

The question, in this case, if indeed it can be called a question, is whether it would be agreeable or disagreeable to God's will, that the ministers of his church should enjoy the tithes of the land as a maintenance in perpetuity, whenever a nation has embraced the religion of Christ; or whether they should depend continually for support on spontaneous oblations. A general maintenance entirely from private property, distinct from any peculiar provision for the clergy, seems to be excluded from the case, as not only the labourer appears, according to the Scriptures, to be entitled to some stipend, but the ministers of the present day are restrained from the gainful occupations exercised by the first teachers; they must therefore be supported, in some degree at least, by a provision derived in some manner from the people, or live on their own resources; and that the latter alternative is not designed, is evident, inasmuch as none but persons of independent property would be admissible to the ministry; an inference which it would be difficult, not to say de-

servedly unpopular, to defend and establish. The question, then, as we have observed, first lies between a voluntary and uncertain, or a legal and constant provision; and then it is secondly to be considered, whether the institution of tithes in particular may be believed to receive the approbation of God, if it is his pleasure that a permanent income should be provided. In the first case, the answer is obvious. On the general principle of performing a good action in the best, or in a more rather than less beneficial manner, it is evident that a constant and fixed provision must be more desirable than an uncertainty. Kindness and charity in making the benefaction, would naturally prompt a perpetual settlement of the gift. The receivers of the bounty would doubtless esteem it most conducive to their domestic comfort, how much soever they may respect individuals, that they should live in independence, generally, of the caprices and humours of their congregations. I venture to entertain the opinion, that even dissenting ministers, could they divest themselves (as we have seen they are at perfect liberty to do) of all imagination of the divine preference to voluntaryism in the abstract, would not refuse a certainty of money payments, under the denomination of legal property, for a condition of dependence on voluntary support, not very dissimilar to mendicity. The concurrent voices of humanity in both the givers and receivers, and we presume of the dissenters, left to the unbiassed decision of their reason and good feeling, are all given in favour of property enjoyed by a legal security. And that a regular provision of this kind

is more to be relied upon than voluntary contributions, is a natural presentiment well sustained, and probably, in fact, engendered by experience. (See accounts of Dissenting Meeting-Houses; Confessions of Ministers; Croly on Ecclesiastical Finance, &c. &c.) It, besides, is not liable to that objection of making the minister so dependent on his congregation for support, that he is under the temptation of fashioning his doctrines to their prejudices, and of concealing or disguising the truth for fear of giving offence, and thus suffering a diminution of income. This is a very important consideration, as ministers are rather to be guides to the people, than the people to the ministers. With respect to the second branch of the inquiry, whether tithes are the property with which it may be presumed that the clergy ought to be invested; it would lead us into a discussion of very unnecessary length, were we to view the institution with regard to the amount of the endowment. Few persons can, it may be presumed, with any show of reason, object to the endowment of tithes, as being *too great* to enable the ministers of the church to live in that respectable station, to which their education, as well as their profession, it is generally imagined, entitles them. Fewer still, probably, will object to tithes as being *too small* a provision for the ministry. It is thought sufficient, to determine our present point, to observe, that the founders of tithes under the christian religion, lived in an age when that dispensation was become the religion of the land, imitated the appointment which had been made by divine authority in one only instance where a true

religion was national, and cannot reasonably be imagined to err in having followed so unobjectionable an example: to which it may be added, that tithes are certainly bestowed on the clergy by the liberality of our forefathers, and are lawfully secured and enjoyed by them. The Apostles had no tithes to exact, and to compel the payment of; for there had not been that piety in the nations where they ministered, to grant them an endowment. The Apostles very wisely and very piously contented themselves with appealing only to the gratitude of believers, for they had no property to which they could prefer a legal right. But the ministry of the present day have received gifts of tithes from the owners of land in former ages. We have so far been better treated than the Apostles. And it would be folly in us, such folly as I conceive the dissenters themselves would not be guilty of, were they placed in our situations, to be contented with only appealing—even encroachment to think of appealing at all—to the gratitude of believers, when we possess in tithes a property of our own, intended to be our support in lieu of voluntary contributions.

Having endeavoured, with due regard to brevity, to disabuse the public mind on the subject of tithes as a taxation on the *people*, it remains now, for the sake of justice and truth, to be added, that tithes are intended to be a blessing to those very persons who have been accustomed to consider them as a personal impost; a blessing to the poor more particularly, in providing them with the apostolic and true ministry free of expense to themselves. As the tax which supports the ministry is on the land, and

not on the people, religion is to cost its disciples nothing. So far are tithes, when justice and prudence are exercised in the engagement and cultivation of farms, from being a tax on the occupiers, that they make religion cheap to every class of the community. But this is not all. Those who falsely accuse the government of taxing the people for the support of the church, are themselves literally taxing them for the support of their societies. Various dissenters, in various ways, draw money by voluntary contribution from the property of their adherents. They first persuade them that it is for the benefit of their souls that they should attach themselves to their ministry, and then they are under an obligation of bearing a part of their maintenance out of their own pockets, which is a species of taxation of the person. Many particularly of the poor are thus deprived of their pence and halfpence weekly, who can ill afford the sacrifice. Thus the dissenters complain of the church for doing what she does not, but are actually doing the very thing themselves. Happy will it be for the poor, when they shall not only see how they have been imposed upon by false pretenders to ministerial calls and inspiration, but be able to save their money with advantage, by returning to the church of the Apostles and of Christ.

13thly. It is further objected to the Church of England establishment, that it is a bounty upon a particular species of religious instruction. By a bounty upon any branch of commerce is meant, the attempt to force by premiums a supply beyond the demand, or to reward the production of a particular article by a sum over and above its marketable value. Viewed

in this light, the scheme of an establishment is open to formidable objections. Why, it might be said, if its object be to furnish instruction, is the bounty attached to the production of a specific kind, when other kinds are equally adapted to meet the demand? Why should not the respective qualities of each kind be left to recommend it to the preference of the community? The only reason that can be given, is, that the state has other ends to answer by this mode of provision than that the people should simply be supplied with religious knowledge; that its object is to give an advantage to that specific kind which it has decided to be the best. But in relation to what purposes is it the best? (Conder, pp. 269, 270.)

Whether the comparison of an established church to what is called a bounty conveys to the rightly constituted mind an idea of indecorum, I stay not to decide. The objections which appeared to the author so formidable are founded on the assumption, that other kinds of instruction than those in the church are equally adapted to meet the demand; on the people's right to frame views of religion for and by themselves; on the state having some sinister end to serve, and on the church not being the best institution. In answer to these observations, I shall only remark, that if the instruction afforded in other societies were only equally as good as that in the church, there is no reason in this fact assigned for separating from the establishment. That the people's right to choose by themselves, each kind of instruction being left to recommend itself, is as we have seen a nullity; that the church is the institution most agreeable to the society established by Christ

and his Apostles, and is therefore the best ; that the state does only its duty in patronising it above all other societies ; and that if, in addition to this, the church is calculated in its principle, more than the sects, to propagate truth, and to preserve unity in all its essential points,—it has superior claims on the respect of both the government and the people.

14thly. It is objected again, that establishments are inconsistent with their own purpose.

The objects to which they relate are naturally incapable of being enforced by secular power. (James, p. 39.) If it would be manifestly absurd to make a nation of philosophers by act of parliament, quite as absurd is the attempt to make a nation of christians by such an act. (Address on Eccl. Estab. by J. J. Davies, p. 6.)

It is difficult to tell how humiliating a sense it inspires of education in this country, that writers held to be respectable for their authority, should commit themselves to such assertions as that which I have selected. The objection proceeds on the absurd supposition, that the intention of our establishment is to make men christians by law. The establishment is intended to provide all the people in the country with the *means* of learning christianity, and of supplying an able body of ministers to labour for their conversion and edification.

15thly. Another objection is, an alleged unfitness of establishments for the conversion of the heathen.

Nothing can be more unfounded than the opinion that there is any inconsistency between our own establishment and missionary enterprise. The members of the establishment are as much at liberty as

any other body to provide for a ministry in heathen lands; and the church possesses the power of dispatching the ministers of the gospel into every clime. Some of the most pious and excellent labourers in the remotest portions of the Lord's vineyard have issued from the church of this country. The means of maintenance might doubtless be advantageously increased: fresh facilities might thus be afforded for extended operations. This must in a great degree depend on individual exertion.

16thly. Another objection is, that the establishment is a punishment to dissenters.

As to tithes, we have seen that they are in reality no punishment, but a boon. That the church has enjoyed some privileges denied to the dissenters is true, and has been in some such respects a punishment to them, may be also true. But if it may be shown to be their own fault that they do not join the establishment, and if it is but right that, as men ought to unite with it, its members should enjoy most favour of the government, (to which there can be no reasonable objection,) then men who will not attach themselves to the church, though in duty bound so to do, have no right to complain of some degree of disadvantage.

Our catalogue of the dissenter's grievances, real or imaginary, would be incomplete without some allusion to the subject of church rates. I will observe on this head only, that there lies no objection to them, in as far as they are taxes on *property*; but there may be, and I think there are, inconveniences in their operation. Not that I imagine that the inhabitants of towns would be enabled to hire more valuable dwell-

lings were they exonerated from this payment, for it appears to me that the owners of property would advance their rents, and secure the benefit of the exoneration to themselves. Present proprietors would doubtless receive a *bonus*, to which, by the way, they are not in justice entitled, as they purchased their property according to its value to the owner, under the existence of the rate in question. But though the individual sums raised by church rates are generally trifling in proportion to the means of each payer, and might be easily calculated upon, and allowed for in hires and purchases of estates, yet it must be granted, as it appears to me, there are uncommon occasions, which almost elude calculation, when large collections may be necessary—so large as to involve the less opulent payers in temporary difficulty. And if these accidents befall the opponents of the church, they will naturally be the more impatient under the exaction. In abatement, however, of these annoyances, it is to be recollected that the rates are a tribute to the government of the country, demanded of all occupiers, without favour or distinction, in proportion to their occupations; and that the reality of the grievance lies entirely in the negative of the question, whether government is justly authorised to establish the church, and require the support of the subjects universally; and that therefore, if it appears that separatists are disobeying God and the king in maintaining opposition houses of worship, the cause of complaint is to be found rather in their own blindness and perverseness, than in the course pursued by the ruling authorities. Still, if the house or farm-tenant in less easy circum-

stances could be exempted from the liability of being called upon, on extraordinary emergencies, for indefinite sums which they can ill afford to pay, without injustice to others, without detriment to the establishment, and without the anomaly of that which ought to be a national institution, being unsupported by property arising from the people in general; I would not withhold my consent from an alteration of the law which effected and secured objects so desirable, though not on the ground of hardship peculiar to the dissenter as bound to support the church established, but on a principle which affects dissenters and churchmen alike.

It must be observed here, that the payment of church rates cannot be called an objection to the church, or to the establishment—only to the mode of its maintenance.

II. The foregoing pages display the force of the dissenters' arguments against the establishment of the church. Equally numerous as these arguments, and not very much less frivolous, are the objections which are made by them to the Prayer-book, and which will form our second branch of this subject.

I shall take them without any great regard to arrangement, and make no further reflections upon them than I think absolutely necessary.

1st. It is objected, in a general way, against forms of prayer, that they are not so fit for devotional purposes as unpremeditated supplication. This objection arises very much from the idea that the first christians mentioned in Scripture prayed extemporaneously. To the objection it may be answered—
(1.) That it has been argued with great truth, in

opposition to all that can be said against it, that our Saviour has set us the example of a form in giving us what is called the Lord's prayer. (2.) It is to be observed also, that men in these days have not gifts of the Spirit equal to those in the times of the Apostles, and that it is rash and presumptuous for one of ourselves to babble the fluency of his own thoughts and feelings, rather than to trust to a carefully and wisely constructed formulary. If a form of prayer is good, and is drawn up in words which suit the general condition of worshippers, it is much safer and more reverential to depend on its accuracy, than to be exposed to the "sacrifice of fools," to the feelings and fancies and infirmities of men sometimes the most ignorant and infatuated, who utter such extravagant falsehoods and follies in their prayers as are shocking to all enlightened and sober-minded christians, and must be highly offensive to the Deity, and even much safer than to commit ourselves to the effusions of the more orthodox. (3.) The objection as to *reading* the prayers arises, like almost every other which is brought against us, from ignorance. A man may deliver a prayer, when the words lie printed before him, with as much spirituality, as if they came from his own inspired imagination, or were the sole dictates of his own devotion.

2ndly. From the objection to forms in general, we descend to particular passages of our own liturgy, of which none is held in much more abhorrence than the following, taken from the burial service. 1. "We commit his body to the ground in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life." 2. The deceased is styled our "dear brother." 3. We give

God hearty thanks for that it hath pleased him "to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world; and we pray that we may "rest in Him, as our hope is this our brother doth." The ground of objection to these passages lies in their being to be pronounced over persons of every description of character, however unchristian, and that this indiscriminate use of them is extremely unwarrantable. The first is represented to signify that the church expresses a sure and certain hope that the deceased will rise to eternal happiness; and in affixing this signification on the passage, it has occasionally been misquoted, as in the Protestant Dissenters' Catechism, by Mr. Samuel Palmer of Hackney,—“a sure and certain hope of *his* resurrection to eternal life.” Now if this is the construction which it bore in the minds of the compilers of the liturgy, and which it bears in the minds of any of its subscribers, the Prayer-book would not be liable to that objection with which it has been so unreasonably charged on its account. It was the intention of the framers of that volume, as may be seen by the rubric preceding the burial service, that this service should be read only over persons who were in communion with the church, on the true principles of church fellowship; in which case there could be no presumption and fallacy in expressing for the deceased a certain hope of a happy resurrection. Similarly of the rest of the expressions, take them in connexion with this consideration, as they ought to be, in order to decide on the merits of the Prayer-book, and the whole of them, as integral parts of the book, become unobjectionable; and the composition of the

Prayer-book is the point now under examination. There may, or there may not be fault in the existing members of the church, not to carry their discipline into effect, and to excommunicate those who merit the punishment; but the excellence of the Prayer-book, our present subject, is entirely independent of the conduct of the church, and in this instance is unimpeachable, even admitting the passages all to bear the most exalted sense which has been imposed upon them. Circumstances, it is true, forbid one at least of the passages objected to, to be understood generally in the manner intended by its authors, if such were their intention, as we have insinuated that it was; and to prevent misconstructions and objections, it were well that the true state of the subject was in the possession of the people. How far different ministers may feel themselves at liberty to proceed in the interpretation of each clause, as applicable to those departed souls of whom they had not the brightest hopes, it is not for an individual to decide. The deceased may be supposed to be regarded with some affection by at least a part of his attendants to the grave. "The sure and certain hope" is partly at least that anticipation of a general resurrection which the believer enjoys, in opposition to the miserable notion of annihilation and the denial of a future state. The hope of our brother's resting in Christ is a hope which cannot be in any one particular case perfectly impossible, while we have no knowledge to enable us to form a certain judgment. It is impossible for us to tell how far ignorance may have been his capacity of acceptance, and the delivery from the

miseries of the world must always be in itself, simply considered, a cause of thanksgiving.

But it must be added, that separation is to blame in great measure for the church not excommunicating her unworthy members, because excommunication as a punishment must be absurd, and be rendered unavailing, when the dissenting minister is willing to receive the discarded churchman into at least his own congregation, and perhaps to admit him to his ceremonies of baptism and the Supper of the Lord. It follows therefore that the separate systems are highly culpable for whatever is inappropriate in the passages of the burial service, so obnoxious to their supporters, and that they are so far deserving of the censure with which they reproach the establishment.

3. The form for the absolution of the sick is another offence; and certainly if it is to be understood that the minister actually pardons the penitent by his own authority, the form is truly abominable. This is the sense imposed upon it by our adversaries, and no doubt the language is such as affords them too favourable a pretext for the odious accusation. But it is no secret to our friends, whatever it may be to our enemies, that we never entertain the least idea of understanding the words according to such an interpretation.

I must confess, that the clause in question, "I absolve thee," does not appear to me to labour under those inconveniencies which present themselves to some other persons. One of the first observations that occur to the mind, on its perusal, is, that the priest absolves the sick man only in such a way as

a minister absolves, and has authority and power to absolve him, and not in the manner in which God or Christ absolves him. It is quite illiberal and inconsistent with true criticism for an opponent, and unnecessarily fearful in a friend, to imagine that the priest is intended to be acting in any but a human capacity, and that the words "absolve," and "authority and power to absolve," as applied to him, are not meant to have their appropriate significations. With respect to the word "absolve" having a different signification as applied to the priest, than when signifying a divine act, it is *reasonable* so to consider it; but besides that, it is founded on scriptural example. The argument for the power of absolution in the minister is derived from that sentence of our Saviour, addressed to his Apostles: "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained," (John xx. 23); and from a similar declaration to St. Peter, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." (Matt. xvi. 19.) It is not difficult to perceive in the former of these texts, that there are two distinct modes of remitting sin—one by the minister, and the other by God. The difference between the human act and the divine is still more strikingly expressed in the latter. There is evidently a distinction between the act of the Apostle's loosing on earth, and God's loosing in heaven; or else there is no meaning in the promise and assurance, that God will loose what they loosed. By parity of reasoning, which is quite in point, on the word "absolve" used in reference to these texts,

our first conclusion from reason is thus confirmed, that the priest absolves differently from the manner in which God absolves. Then, secondly, as to the power and authority in the church, or the minister, to absolve. It may not be very easy to define fully and exactly the meaning of the terms; but enough has been said, I trust, already to preclude the possibility of understanding that the form of absolution to be used by the minister in the church arrogates divine power. The minister is to be understood to absolve the sick man as a minister ought to absolve him, and no farther than he has power and authority to do it. To state in general terms what, on a reasonable view of that matter, the whole passage as expressive of absolving power signifies—the doctrine of the power of absolution like the precedent, seems to be obtained from the texts we have already cited. But it can hardly be imagined that our reformers intended that the ministers of the present day have exactly the same discernment and the same authority as the inspired Apostles. *They* might be able to pronounce a man's absolution with justice and propriety; they might judge truly of his spiritual condition and of his acceptance with God, and they might declare him absolved in their judgment, and the same judgment might be passed in heaven; not because it was their judgment, but because their judgment was true. We cannot presume to imagine that the same power of judging, and the same justness of decision, is vested in ourselves as in the Apostles. But though these be denied to us as ministers, it is very possible, indeed certain, that we possess inferior powers and authority. We are authorised to absolve as ministers any man

who truly believes and repents. We may say that we absolve a man in the name of Christ as His ministers, if he is a true believer. This is an absolution which we have perfect authority to convey to the mind of the penitent by a ministerial declaration; and this is what at least may be easily and rationally understood to be signified in the clause of the visitation service: this is a loosing on earth of that which will be loosed in heaven. But a rational view of the matter may be carried yet farther. As the Apostles doubtless formed their opinions of the characters of those whom they ministerially absolved, so of course the clergyman who visits the sick, who examines him as to his repentance, and receives his confession, judges as well as he can of his capacity for divine absolution. And in the form of pronouncing the absolution of the church, he may very reasonably be imagined to involve his own opinion of the case, as if he said, "In my own mind I acquit you, or, you are absolved according to my judgment." Nor is there any difficulty in the way of the minister's thus giving his opinion, as the sick man is to be presumed to be not excommunicated, and therefore not deserving of excommunication; that is, presumed to be a member of Christ. And it is such doctrine as the minister is warranted to maintain, that the true believer is absolved from his sins on confession duly made. (1 John i. 9.) And it ought to be, and was likely intended to be, comfortable to the penitent to believe that the minister of Christ, who is by virtue of his office supposed to be acquainted with his laws, can feel himself warranted to trust that he is in such a faithful and penitent state, that he may judge he is

absolved, and declare his own opinion accordingly. The authority and the power which he possesses to absolve can extend no farther than he is correct in his judgment; the value of his declaration "I absolve thee," in this view of the matter, must in fact depend on its accuracy. This point is, of course, not exactly ascertainable: still it is a very intelligible statement, that he has authority and power to absolve ministerially as far as he judges correctly; and the sentence of absolution being introduced by alluding to the authority and power, without defining their limits, leaves the act of absolution every latitude which can preserve it from presumption.

Words might certainly have been more cautiously written, so as not to have been made subject to cavil, or have appeared superficially worthy of the utmost reprobation.

It deserves to be added, that one construction which has been put on the absolving clause by very respectable authority, is, that it refers only to the censures of the *church*. This would show still further the impertinence of the dissenters' objections.

4. Another objection to the liturgy, are the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian creed, even with those who admit the excellence of the rest of the composition. It would be better, in my opinion, that these expressions were qualified, or even altogether omitted; but if they are interpreted with the desire of putting on them the best construction, instead of an intention of giving them the most unjustifiable meaning of which they can by any possibility be capable, they may be received without difficulty. When it is declared, that whosoever be-

lieveth not shall be damned, it is not to be imagined that it is intended that those who have no means and opportunities of knowing Christ will be condemned for infidelity ; neither do we ever suppose that men will be judged and condemned for believing imperfectly those truths which they never enjoyed the ability of fully receiving. On the same principle, that where much is given is much required, and where little is given is little required, it may be said by adaptation, that a man will be judged according to that he hath, not according to that he hath not. Admit that the true belief concerning the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is of the very utmost importance, that the explication in the creed is scriptural, and understand the damnatory clauses with a view to these modifications, and they appear to be defensible.

5. Additional objections are drawn from our baptismal ceremony.

The church appears to hold, that the duly baptized infant is regenerated with the Spirit of God. By dissenters this regeneration is denied.

(1.) If it be first objected that infants ought not to be baptized, because it appears that the persons of whom we are most indisputably informed that they received baptism, were adults, and were not baptized in their infancy ; this argument is trivial. Those persons *could not* be baptized when infants ; for at the time they were of that tender age, Christianity had not been instituted. Christianity was just revealed to the world at the period to which the sacred history refers ; and whenever that was the case, there must of necessity be grown-up persons to be

baptized; and those would, doubtless, make the most conspicuous figure in the holy narratives. The analogy of circumcision is enough to warrant the practice of pædobaptism, together with the absence of a prohibition, which must have implied to the Jews the legality of the baptismal ceremony for infant, as well as other members of the covenant. It seems presumptuous that children should live in an uncovenanted state. Our church, it may be observed, does not insist on infant baptism as indispensable or necessary.

(2.) If it is signified that it is absolutely impossible for so young a person as an infant to be regenerated with the Holy Spirit, and that the idea of such regeneration is monstrous or ridiculous; there is one fact recorded in Scripture, (Luke i. 15,) which is alone sufficient to correct so rash an opinion: St. John the Baptist was to be even filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb. Besides which it may be noted, that true religion is ever cautious of limiting, in idea, the powers of the Almighty.

If the objection lies against the term *regenerated* being applied to infants, because such recipients of baptism often exhibit, in childhood and succeeding stages of life, a destitution of christian graces; or, because the new creature appears frequently identified in Scripture with a subject of mature age; it is deemed an adequate reply to the former ground of objection, that regeneration does not imply a necessary continuance in grace; that the regenerated may relapse into a state of nature; that children are very apt to grow up in wickedness without due nurture in the Lord; that the idea of regeneration does appear to

be connected with baptism in Scripture ; that as infants are evidently capable of inspiration, there is no impropriety in believing that they are spiritually regenerated in baptism, to some degree of which infants are susceptible ; and that the use of the word regeneration, as to infants, leaves open, in terms, to every child so early baptized, all that preparation for eternity which may be described by conversion, repentance, renovation, and sanctification. With regard to the latter scruple, it is certain that adults are described in Scripture as born of God, and exhibiting in their lives a high degree of obedience to the gospel. It is not improbable that these persons were baptized, on their conversion, at an age when they were capable of receiving revealed truth ; but whether baptized early or late in life, the language that is applied to them, particularly in the epistolary pages of St. John, appears to designate an *abiding state* of holiness, commenced probably on their conversion, and continued since that change in their character, or attained after such lapses as are incident to the renewed nature.

(3.) Then, thirdly, with reference to immersion. Whatever lexicons may pronounce the interpretation of the word "baptize," it is impossible to show that it means "to dip." It can be made almost certain that this is not its genuine meaning. The lexicons may assign to it that sense, because baptizing was probably believed by their authors to be performed only by immersion in the first age. It is not unlikely that "to baptize" has obtained the signification of "to dip," from the practice of the primitive church, rather than that that church baptized by immersion because

the word bore that exclusive meaning. Positive proof is wanting that the first christians immersed the whole body in any one instance. It is, or at least may be probable, that they did practise immersion in many instances: it is probable that they did not perform the practice in all. The prayer-Book enjoins the duty of immersion; so far the book is unobjectionable even to the advocates of the practice. A difficulty certainly arises in the case of the adult sprinkled in infancy, who is dissatisfied with the rite so performed, and desires a more complete ablution. He cannot obtain it of the church which believes baptism to have been performed, and that there can be but one baptism. But even this case gives no warranty for separation from the church; for either only the ministers of the church may perform baptism for the people, or other persons may celebrate it. If only the ministers of the true catholic church may baptize—as every person who understands the Scripture would believe—then those who are dissatisfied with the aspersion or the affusion of their infancy, may endeavour to persuade the rulers of the church, if possible, to provide some salvo for their consciences; but, that if such reformation cannot be brought about, they may be contented without immersion, because there can be no culpability in themselves for want of it. On the contrary, if any besides the ordained minister of the true church may baptize, then the candidate for immersion may employ an unordained person to perform the ceremony, and will be as bound as before to unite with the ecclesiastical body.

(4.) Another objection to our baptismal ceremony

was in the appointment of godfathers and godmothers. These persons are intended as guardians of the children's religious education, in default of parental care and authority. It would naturally appear a wise provision of the church for the security of children, in some measure, against the loss of good parents, or the negligence of bad ones. It often happens that sponsors do not perform their duty to the children whom they promise to superintend; but this is the error of the people, not the fault of the ordinance.

6. Under this head I shall class together a variety of objections, which are more trivial than any of the preceding. It is objected (1.) that the bishop uses the words "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" in ordaining ministers by imposition of hands,—which may justly be interpreted to imply, that God communicates ordinary gifts of His Spirit to those who are presumed to be prepared for ordination, and to receive the commission it conveys agreeably to His will. (2.) That chapters from the Apocryphal books are selected for public lessons, and that this selection seems to give the Apocrypha equal authority with the Bible, when the church denies in the most formal manner that the Apocrypha is of divine origin, and takes especial care to make a wide distinction between it and the Bible. (Art. VI.) (3.) That there are expressions in the Communion service which may be made to signify that Christ is bodily present in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, when it is known that the church denounces the idea as monstrous and abominable. (Art. XXVIII.) (4.) That it is unscriptural to bow at the name of Jesus—to sign with a cross the forehead of the baptized infant—to kneel at the

sacrament—to wear a surplice or a gown—or to use a ring in the solemnization of marriage;—a list which might I believe be somewhat enlarged by other enormities of equal insignificance. It is but equitable to mention that they are generally objected to, I believe, as being a continuation of the customs of the popish church, as well as void of foundation in the words of Scripture. Yet it is evidently unreasonable to object to any thing *merely* because it was approved by the papists. If that principle were sound, the dissenter ought to have no ministers, no houses of worship, nor many other properties which belonged to the papacy—not even any faith in Christ himself; nor can it be imagined that any minister of unprejudiced or impartial mind would refuse to cover his common clothes with a white vestment for the sake of decorum, merely because it was deemed equally decorous by the Church of Rome. Many a dissenter indeed, in these days, displays superiority in this respect to the early puritan. The only practice of the English Church included in these minor objections which could, under any circumstances, be regarded as unbecoming, is the kneeling at the sacrament. This was performed by the Romish Church most probably because that church believed in the real presence of Christ: but to the protestant, who denies this transubstantiation, the form of genuflexion is not liable to the same reproach. We kneel perfectly independent of any such belief, as we kneel to adore and to worship God and Christ in other parts of our services. Such are the objections of dissenters against the institution of the Church of England in weight and importance. It ought to be particularly observed,

and continually borne in mind, that it is not the doctrines of the church which the dissenters condemn. One of their writers, in an anonymous production, highly extolled by the celebrated Doctor Smith, has these words: "We unfeignedly love all that is unquestionably good in the episcopal church, its great doctrines." (Smith's Letter, p. 56, note.) The Eclectic Review of December, 1829, contains this passage: "The Church, it cannot be denied, professes the life-giving doctrines of the gospel, favours every great principle rescued from Rome by the reformers, and puts into the lips of the people a language of devotion, unrivalled in majesty, beauty, propriety, and comprehension." Many are the testimonies of dissenters to the excellence of the doctrines and the liturgy of our church. The offensiveness of the church, to them, consists in her exclusive ordination by bishops—her prelacy—her twentieth Article—her union with the state; and in certain passages of her Prayer-book, which have been enumerated. Yet in almost every particular object of their disapprobation, the church is either to be commended or justified. Episcopacy and prelacy, the obnoxious Article, the abstract connexion with the state, or the idea of an establishment in opposition to the voluntary system; the impost of tithe considered as a mode of remunerating the minister, without taxing the *people*, are all so many claims to popular admiration. The objections, in short, both general and particular, of dissenters to the establishment of the church, are given in the preceding part of this chapter, under sixteen heads. It would be difficult to classify them according to their several genera. Suffice it to say, that there is not

one of them which we have not shown to have proceeded either from a childish misunderstanding of Scripture, like, particularly, the second, the fifth, and the twelfth; or from a want of reason and judgment, as more especially the sixth, ninth, tenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth; or from an almost total disregard to fact, of which the most striking instance is the eleventh. In a word, there is not one which has not been proved to be entirely unworthy of respect as an obstacle to union with the church; not one which the dissenters ought to urge for separation from the establishment; and not one which points to any peculiar pressure of hardship on the dissenter, except perhaps a portion of the sixteenth: but still, that this is an inconvenience to which he is most probably bound to submit, not I mean as a penalty for his misconduct, but because the payments and disadvantages to which *he* is subject, lawfully arise from a state of things which in its principle is agreeable to the divine will. (See note U.) As to the second class of objections, the attacks on the Prayer-book are sometimes directed against points of most indisputable excellence, particularly in the abstract establishment of forms. The censures of its parts generally extend, as has been seen, only to matters of most trivial import. And that this is a just judgment, we have the additional evidence of an eminent dissenter, in his preface to Palmer's Protestant Dissenters' Catechism. In alluding to certain controversies in the Church of England (of which farther notice will be taken in a subsequent page) he writes, on the supposition that they have given too much advantage to the cause of dissent by weakening that of the church, that dissen-

ters can afford now not to insist on the imperfections of the Prayer-book as an argument for separation, and speaks of those imperfections in a manner which implies that they are really insignificant. His words are —“ If these things have contributed to place dissenters on higher ground than that on which they formerly stood, let them disdain to dwell on little blemishes in the liturgy ;” by which expression, “ little blemishes in the liturgy,” he signifies the faults in general which dissenters have found with that excellent compilation. It is impossible for any intelligent person to read this reflection, without observing that the writer at least must have believed that it was dishonourable to dwell, as dissenters have done, on little blemishes in the liturgy, and that they cannot be justified in magnifying errors or imperfections only to serve a purpose, and that errors or imperfections have been censured beyond their deserts. But our object is not so much now to expose the spirit of this hypercriticism of our Book of Prayer, as to state the implied confession of so great an authority as the editor of Palmer’s Catechism, that the scrupled passages in that formulary, of acknowledged “ unrivalled beauty,” are little blemishes. And after analysing all the objections which have been brought against it—not forgetting that the dissenters are themselves the occasion of one or more, particularly as regards the burial service—it is evident that the strict assertion, in the Athanasian creed, of the necessity of belief in a true doctrine, is almost the only one which remains of any the slightest real importance ; that though several improvements might be made, yet that there is nothing which need give much pain to an enlightened and liberal conscience :

that the assent to the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian creed, after all, concerns the clergy rather than the people, who can withhold their own without any necessity of separation from church communion ; —so that it may be concluded that the whole *residuum* of all the objections of dissenters to the church which we have hitherto examined, when separated from what is false and unfounded, and considered as a ground of argument for division, is very little more than this—that there are a few passages in the Prayer-book which could be improved, but that they concern the ministry more than their congregations.

This is a summary of real objection to the church, as far as our examination has at present extended. There are other objections to be noticed, but we will next proceed to consider the influence which is due to these in deciding the question of separation, at the same time exposing the unimportance of the few objections which remain.

CHAPTER X.

**THE DUTY OF DISSENTERS TO UNITE WITH THE CHURCH
DEMONSTRATED FROM THE PREMISES, WITH CON-
CLUDING REMARKS.**

THE eighth and preceding chapters of this volume are intended to exhibit the principles and nature of a church constituted by episcopal ordination. It is a corporation of christians evidently instituted by God for the most essential and important purposes—the establishment and conservation of unity in truth, spirit, and society. The arguments indeed for the divine design of episcopacy as a means of unity, stated in Chapter VIII. App. V., may be strengthened more particularly by the considerations, that it is the will of God, according to reason and Scripture, (pp. 95—105,) that his ministers should receive external calls to their office, to render the ministry efficient; that ordination, in part at least, by bishops, is a call of that nature, and the only scriptural one in existence.

The principal objections to the Church of England, as maintained by dissenters, have been reduced to their real insignificance in Chapters VIII. and IX. These are, in fact, the strongest they can urge against the form of church established in these kingdoms.

On the one hand we have seen, then, the reasons for supporting the church establishment; and on the other we have reviewed the most avowed and weighty objections. The mode of deciding whether the church ought to be supported by the people, must of course be, as in any other alleged question, where there are arguments on both sides, to balance one against the other, and to be influenced by the preponderating motives. And that the arguments for adhering to our established institution are immeasurably greater than those of a contrary nature, and that therefore every individual is bound to be actuated by this vast preponderance, is evident on the slightest consideration. It is to be recollected and remembered, that there is nothing of error in the establishment which might not be corrected; that all professing Christians ought to be "striving together for the faith of the gospel." (Philip. i. 27.); that all evil might thus be remedied, as far as human nature will admit, on the principle of episcopacy, the principle of divine appointment; that the principle might thus be carried out to all practicable perfection; that it tends to the happiest results, and would thus be in greater or less time productive of them. And the inquiry which it concerns us to make, under these circumstances, is, whether it be possible for any man to deviate from the designs of God in the institution of episcopacy, and to strike into any path of his own invention. And the voice of religion immediately and most incontestably pronounces that it is not possible. When the arguments for uniting with the church as established in this kingdom are weighed against the residuum of the dissenters' objections, after due analysa-

tion, we find in one scale an ordinance of God to secure some of the most essential objects of the gospel, together with several very valuable adjuncts, such as the alliance of church and state, the endowment of a ministry, &c. &c. ; and in the other, very little but trivial and absurd cavil. It immediately appears, that to separate for these reasons from a church thus appointed by God, is to depart from the will of God, declared on a most important point ; to act contrary to the most powerful arguments for union with the church, and to comply with extremely weak and frivolous motives for forsaking and opposing it. It is acting the hypocritical part of straining at the gnats of trifling and remediable imperfections, and swallowing the camel of rebellion against a great and glorious design of the Almighty. It is opposing the will of God, in following Him only in the dust of the balance, and in disobeying Him in some of the most important designs of His providential care for the salvation of men. (Chapter VIII., § 4, App. V. p. 247, &c.) And as opposition to God is always mixed up with evil principles and mischievous practices, so it is particularly the case in the present instance. The opposition in question is not merely made on slight pretences, but it is also associated invariably with action on a principle of human device, the abuse of private judgment, recorded in our sixth chapter ; a root in human nature, which produces the fruits of infidelity, as well as every kind of heresy, and all the wickedness of which the conscience of man can delight in the commission. It is on grounds of almost the merest plausibility, to prefer a flattering principle of human nature, gratifying to the pride and self-satisfaction of

men,—to prefer that to a principle which is divine ; it is, in a word, following man in opposition to God, and the consequences naturally are error and confusion and wickedness in this world, such as are briefly mentioned in Chapter IV. and in the notes on that chapter, rather than the approximation to the beauty of holiness delineated in the third chapter, and which might otherwise adorn the land ; and in the end, the punishment which is due to such perverseness in a state of retribution. Nor is this all the evil of the consequences of the opposition : it is at the same time, in a high degree, a revolt against the king. There is not any duty more unequivocally enjoined in Scripture, than to give all due honour to the ruling authorities. (1 Pet. ii. 13, 17 ; Rom. xiii. 1.) And we said in a former part of this work, that if the king of England were conforming to the divine will in establishing the episcopal church through his dominions, that the people who opposed their monarch in this respect, were guilty of the double offence of “resisting” the powers on earth as well as in heaven. (See p. 48.) Now according to what has been advanced in the preceding pages concerning the episcopal church being that which is exclusively of divine appointment, and the duty of the monarch to establish that church, it cannot be for a moment doubted by any persons who remember and understand our argument, that the sovereign of this country is justified, nay, is bound by the most solemn and divine obligations to establish episcopacy among his people ; and that those of his subjects who are resisting his will in this respect, are dishonouring the king in direct disobedience to the divine command.

ments, and are making divisions in his empire, which are injurious to the interests of the community, and are destructive of his legitimate authority.

There are, it is true, other objections urged by the dissenters against the church, but none which materially affect the conclusion to which we have now arrived. It is objected by dissenters, as a defence of their own separation, that the Church of England has set them the example of separation by its disunion from the Church of Rome. To this it is quite sufficient to answer, that in our separating from the Church of Rome we returned to the independence which we enjoyed before its usurped dominion, and that we expurgated ourselves of its pollutions without sacrificing a single essential principle; that the divine institution of episcopacy for the most momentous objects has not been violated in that separation; and that we have only taken ground whither it is the duty of papists to follow.—It is objected again, that as we have received our episcopal commission through the medium of the Romish church, it has lost its title to preference. Certainly, in whatever degree there has been at any time a departure from primitive doctrine in an episcopal church, some of the practical imperfection of episcopacy is apparent: and when episcopacy has to resume or continue its functions after such aberrations, its duties will partly consist in the recovery or the extrication of what is true. It will have to propagate and preserve the truth; but, first, in some sense to re-establish it. Doubtless much of this restoration of pure doctrine was necessary at the time of the Reformation. The transmission of truth had been to a certain extent interrupted by the inroads

of popery, and the operation of episcopacy had been greatly ineffective. The past inefficiency however of the institution, the degree of its incompetency of emancipation from the Roman bondage, and the difficulty of its resurrection from the depths of corruption into which it had fallen, were much less considerable than the enemy appears sometimes to have imagined. Episcopacy had been a means of preserving in the Church of Rome many very important religious truths, and of thus delivering them to the earliest reformers. The world had never been without an apostolical succession; and while it is impossible to tell that the belief in some of the most vital doctrines of Scripture, or even in Scripture itself, might not have been entirely lost without such a visible witness and keeper of the sacred books and its interpretation; certain it is that much which is most valuable in religion was preserved by the Romish succession, though encumbered with grievous impositions. Nor was the principle of episcopacy, as a preserver and propagator of apostolic truth, incapable of being acted upon on the first assertion of protestantism. The institution had in great measure answered the purposes for which it was designed by God. The bishops of the earlier centuries, though dead, yet spoke in their surviving works. Written tradition of episcopacy was yet in existence, as it is now, for reference and consultation. The bishops of the Reformation had to trace the current of episcopal unity in truth from its source downwards, before it became polluted with the Romish heresy, and by this means to discover the impurities of the stream after the influx of that defilement. Nor was this

a work of difficulty to the learned episcopalians of the time. And indeed, so well did they execute their commission, that it is acknowledged by the dissenters themselves who are called orthodox, and to whom this work is particularly addressed, that the Church of England "professes the life-giving doctrines of the gospel," and "favours every great principle rescued from Rome by the reformers." (*The Eclectic Review*, Dec. 1829.) Thus episcopacy was a mean of the great truths of Christianity being established in the reformed church of this country; and, with the blessing of God upon its endeavours, will it continue, by means of the learning which it enjoys through the favour of the state upon its universities and schools, and by the aid of the primitive and more recent predecessors of the order, to make nearer approaches to apostolic purity. Episcopacy, in short, has been instrumental towards effecting a unity of doctrine in the church, has afforded very efficient means of that unity, by consultation with its earliest members and adherents, and still preserves a tendency to more complete success. Besides which, to express a most important truth in few words, it was calculated and ought to have preserved the two other unities in spirit and in society (*Chap III.*), as well after the interregnum of popish errors as before it. And what is not less to be noted and remembered is this,—that succession of ministers by episcopal ordination is the only mode of appointment which has come to us from inspiration. This is the only order of ministry which is divinely instituted, and for that reason, also, is of course to be the only one instrumental in recovering the world

from any lapses of ignorance or superstition, and is that which is to be alone supported.

Then again the Church of England is reproached with dissensions among her ministers as well as its other members. The dissensions are of much less magnitude and importance, I believe, than it appears to be generally imagined; but were they ever so great, they would not invalidate nor affect the episcopal and scriptural foundation on which the church is erected. The dissensions are not the direct and natural consequence of the principle on which episcopacy is founded: they are such as episcopacy has a direct tendency to remove. The dissensions existing only show that the divine principle of episcopacy, which tends to union in truth, has not been carried out in practice by the ministry of the English church to that extent which is desirable and attainable. Also, whatever be the differences of opinion among the ministers of the establishment, it must be particularly noted that they do not refuse to communicate in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, and are thus, it is to be presumed, not very imperfectly united in spirit. Their union in society is unquestionable.

It is still further objected, that the government errs in establishing a presbyterian church in Scotland. It may be so. It is undoubtedly, according to our views of the subject, a schismatic principle on which the Scottish church is founded; but the errors of any government or of any church are no prejudice to the truth of the apostolicity of our own episcopalian system.

Again, it deserves especial notice that the dissenters

complain most vehemently of the "assent and consent" given to our Prayer-book. This point, it should be observed, concerns most particularly the clergy. But the objection, in spite of all the dissenting arguments, is not of that grave character which is imagined. No clergyman, I suppose, ever thinks of assenting and consenting to every expression in the church Prayer-book as being the best possible. Each assents and consents to every thing in the book understood according to his ability, and the intent of the declaration is that the clergy will profess to use the book in all its parts as prescribed for the sake of uniformity. A clause of the act of Parliament runs accordingly. (xiv. Carol. II.) "Be it further enacted, that every parson, vicar, or other minister whatsoever, shall openly and publicly, before the congregation then assembled, declare his unfeigned assent and consent *to the use* of all things in the said book contained and prescribed in these words and no other. I A. B, &c." And for the sake of preserving the unity of the church, on the divine foundation of episcopacy, supposing there are no other insuperable objections to conformity, any minister can of course conscientiously and easily assent and consent to the use of a book so "unrivalled," as the dissenter writes, "in majesty, beauty, and propriety."

Another favourite objection to the church is the alleged immorality and impiety of some of its ministers, and their *consequent* inability to teach the Scriptures to the people. Whatever may be the characters of any of the clergy, it is to be believed, I think, that the morality of the ministers of the church, generally speaking, stands at least as high as that of the ministers of dissent. I have, as far as my own experience

goes, heard as many and as serious charges laid against the self-constituted ministers of dissent and confusion, as against any of the authorised preachers. The conduct of the inferior orders of the dissenting ministry is probably less observed and less known than that of the clergy : they are not so much a city set upon a hill. There may be very grievous instances of immorality among the clergy : I am not prepared to deny it. But supposing that there are, it does not, in the first place, follow that the immoral minister is incapable of expounding the word of God. One or two verses of St. Matthew's gospel, containing words of our Saviour, will clearly show that immorality is not inconsistent with an ability to teach, and also that the people are not released from their obligation of hearing such ministers. (Matt. xxiii. 1—4.) But it is to be further observed that this immorality, whatever it may be, among the clergy, if existing in any degree beyond what is to be charitably borne as the almost inseparable accompaniment of human infirmity, does not militate against the principle of episcopacy : it is only imperfection in the manner of its being carried by our church into operation, and there may be several other imperfections in the institution which require amendment. But, nevertheless, the same remark is applicable to them all. They do not in the least touch the principle—the only scriptural foundation on which the ecclesiastical fabric stands. Let all imperfections and errors in practice be removed by all righteous means. I might desire that theological learning were more profoundly studied at our universities by candidates for the ministry. It may be my opinion that the examinations for ordina-

tion might be advantageously made more general and more searching. I might wish that the overseers of the presbytery possessed more control over the inferior ministers. It may be highly desirable that the bishops received an extension of authority to provide more summarily against heresy and impiety in the standing ministry. It might be better if the Articles of the church were made more comprehensive; that subscription were required every year of every minister; and that gross misconduct were liable to deserved and easily inflicted punishment from the ecclesiastical superior. [Since the preceding sentence was written, the episcopal powers have been enlarged.] I might have the clergy, if they do it not already, adopt great plainness of speech in their addresses to the people, such as the smallest minority of the illiterate even in an educated congregation may understand, and make the excellence of their discourses consist in the utility of their doctrines infinitely rather than the beauties of composition. I might, in a word, wish for much, in order to perfectionate the episcopal system, and might reform and amend whatever is practically improveable. And such are the learning and virtue of our ministry, as a body, that I doubt not they possess ample means of effecting the utmost improvement of which the system is capable, and that the government of the country will sanction and legalize whatever improvements they think proper to advise;—but to build on any other foundation than that which is laid by God in the Scriptures for the unity and perfection of His church, and which, if its superstructure were carefully and wisely raised, would produce a millennium of christian unity; to build on any human foundation

such as the private judgment principle of dissenters which is described in Chap. VI., and which leads not to one or two sects and their doctrines, but to every sect and every peculiar doctrine—to, in short, an infinitude of heinous error and confusion (Chap IV.); to build on such a foundation in preference to the divine, (Chap. VIII.) is to revolt from the king of the country who supports the protestant episcopal church, and to divide his kingdom against itself; and what is infinitely worse, to rebel, as we have also just seen, against the will, and to defeat, as far as such conduct can, the designs of Providence—designs of uniting professing christians in a happy cooperation for the attainment of all that is most honourable to God and preparatory to a future state; and designs of which the ultimate objects would be speedily in great measure executed were the intended union to take place, and which would progress steadily, if not rapidly, to complete fulfilment, with reference at least to our own country. Glorious indeed, compared with what it now is, would *immediately* become the state of this nominally christian land, had all its religiously disposed inhabitants a zeal of God according to the knowledge of our common cause. All the animosity and division among them alluded to in Chap. IV. would instantly, and much of the disagreement in doctrine would probably, ere a great length of time elapsed, disappear. Whatever is really good in the religious creeds and practices of us all might be preserved without any of the most awful evil which is now attendant on our separate principles. Whatever is really unscriptural, whatever demands improvement in our systems, might be reformed with ease, were all

those who profess the faith in Christ, to strive together as friends and as brethren, for the correction of every abuse and of every material error; were they to use all the influence they naturally possess in improving that which is erected on the scriptural basis, instead of labouring to demolish it and level it with the dust. There could be no real difficulty or danger in repairing the walls of our Zion, when all the labourers in the work wish her peace and prosperity. It is also no trifling consideration, that when the people understand the nature and intent of the episcopal church as established in this kingdom, and as attempted to be briefly described in these pages, and perceive in consequence that membership with the church is a duty of imperative obligation, as being the will of God, and recognise the claims which the opinions of a learned episcopal ministry have upon their attention; not only will dissenters be spared the personal tax of supporting ministers for themselves, but likewise see open to them the universities and pulpits of the land without any intervention of human law. This is a concise view of the immediate consequences of conformity. Its ulterior effects may be reasonably calculated to be greater still, and in the end, a consummation of all that could be wished. I have insinuated in more places than one of this volume, that from the principle of private judgment which is cultivated by dissenters, spring unitarianism and other species of infidelity. I will also add, that it is probable, almost to demonstration, that their principle of private judgment, as described in Chap VI., and their continual opposition to the clergy and the establishment, are greatly answerable, as has been

already intimated in pp. 66, 67, for much of the profaneness, the heathenism, as well as much of the doctrine of spurious christianity which pervade this country. It cannot be reasonably doubted, that, if the doctrines of the clergy were received and followed throughout the land as they ought, that it would be, compared with its actual state, a terrestrial paradise. And when dissenters allow every individual the licentious liberty of abiding by his own judgment; however deficient the man may be in sound knowledge, when they accuse the clergy of a grievous want of success in their ministry even among their nominal adherents and followers, they should consider that the disagreements among christians, and the disrespect which they themselves show to the ordained ministers, probably contribute very largely to engendering a disregard for christianity altogether in the minds of some, and for the doctrines of the clergy, even among the professing members of the church. The sceptical indeed will naturally avow, that the apparent uncertainty of christians with respect to the truth encourages his unbelief. And how much it actually has the effect of rendering our arguments, our advice, and our warnings ineffectual, among the less educated more especially, to have it known that there are multitudes of, by them so called, learned men in the world, who are equally positive as ourselves, but in the delivery of discordant doctrines, and in the inculcation of opposite principles, and who on all hands decry most of us as at least incompetent instructors, if not even deceivers and antichrist,—is known only to Him before whom the secret springs of all actions are disclosed. That it must have a strong tendency to such

a result, and that such a result is produced to a great extent, there can be no reasonable question : and (I say it as a regularly and divinely commissioned minister of Christ) dreadful I fear at the day of account will be the judgment of some who have been most clamorous against the church for its inefficiency, as being themselves partly instrumental, by their abuse of its ministers to the production of the very event which they so vehemently deplore. Not only, according to this view of the subject, would all that loss of christian love be prevented by union, which is in fact a loss of christianity itself,—not only would truth be more and more ascertained by us all in common ; but when the infidel and profane saw our earnest, united, and friendly contentions for the faith, and when they saw, as they certainly would see, the happy and progressive success of our holy conspiracy, where all would be agreed in the objects which they pursue, and in the spirit and means of obtaining them, how must they be confounded,—how must they be convinced ! what an imposing front should we present to all the most impious and heretical of men ! how much more easily than at present might we disseminate among them our common and consistent principles and arguments and views ; and what, in all human probability, could long withstand our combined and well-organized endeavours for their conversion from moral and intellectual sin ? With both the immediate and the more distant results of union on the divine principle, nothing yet accomplished in the christian world could easily bear the remotest comparison. Methodistical success itself on the hearts and minds of the poor would sink almost

into insignificance by the side of those triumphs which would attend and follow the union of all the religious exertion which the country could produce. And, to cast our eyes beyond our own shores, this highly favoured land, which appears to have been designed by Providence for signal honour and prosperity, may yet be destined to inestimably more valuable achievements than the victories of arts and arms, and be made, incalculably above all that she has yet been enabled to effect, a glorious instrument by her example of evangelizing the world. As the flame of liberty which has for ages burnt bright, like some great luminary, in her constitution, communicates at length a light and a heat to neighbouring nations; so from the candlestick of her church may be kindled in other countries, whether episcopacy be established in them or not, a love and a desire of those blessings which are derivable from its institution, and from a faithful discharge of its legitimate functions: that where episcopalian union does exist, it may be advanced through every practicable stage of improvement, and that where it is not, it may be established and maintained, till, from having reduced the theory to successful practice at home, we may all be the more willing and the more able to extend its operations to the extreme and most benighted regions of the earth.

APPENDIX.

THE argument (for an individual one it may be considered) of the preceding chapters would receive a vast corroboration, were the fourth enlarged with an exposure of those false doctrines, on which several sects of nominal christians and others ground much of their peculiarity, and an expansion of the view of their persecution of the adherent to that establishment from which they voluntarily separate. But circumstances appear to have forbidden an enlargement on several of its topics. Assuming however, as I do, most confidently, that the argument is substantially and unanswerably true, and depending, in what follows, entirely on the justness of that assumption, I would venture briefly to advert to the questions of the past and future support of the episcopal church by the government of the country.

The clergy are frequently condemned for interfering in political matters. There are doubtless many important affairs of that nature which it is impossible for them to examine and comprehend and support, or oppose, without a neglect of their peculiar duties. There are none, however, in which they have not, as

members of the commonwealth, some degree of personal interest; and there are as few at least in which they are as intimately concerned, or even more so, than any other class of the community. These are particularly the general duties of the people to the ruling authorities of the country, and the peculiar interests of the church of which they are ministers. It is for them to speak and to act in these matters, where they remark even the appearance of misapprehension.

In conformity with this principle, I would observe that the establishment of the episcopal church, the preference which it has experienced in the location and endowment of its ministry, seems to have been, and still to be, by some too much regarded as political or expedient. There may be policy in the case; but the fact is, and it is all sufficient and paramount to every other consideration, that the establishment is a duty derived from the will of God. The rulers of the land, it is well known, are ministers of God, and are bound as strictly as any other class to conform to His will. (Rom. xiii. 6.) That will is the rule for them and for all. By it the errors of the governors and the governed are both to be rectified, and the welfare of nations is to be procured. *Hinc omne principium, huc refer exitum.* It is the principle on which the wise originate their acts, and it is by obedience to that will that they can reasonably anticipate at least an ultimately successful issue to every enterprise. And as to establish the purest form of the episcopal church of Christ, in preference to all others, is a duty to God, so it is a duty to Him to maintain its establishment by every lawful and just measure.

That the church of this country has always been supported in the wisest and best manner by the ruling powers, I am far from affirming. Several statutes of former days, I cannot conscientiously approve. But, to confine myself to the point now immediately before us, I concur not in the infliction of many of the pains and penalties to which dissenters, much as I shrink from some of their principles and practices with a dread of sinfulness, have been exposed. I think them unjustifiable, not merely because they may have been in some instances disproportioned to the offence; but principally because the nature of the offence has not been sufficiently explained and recognised, and because probably it was in some degree the fault of the church and the state that the crime was not more clearly determined. Penal laws appear with justice enacted against many offences which might be enumerated, because the infinite majority of the civilized portion of mankind are convinced that they are sins against society and against God. But the cases of religious separation and heretical opinions, present a different appearance. The delinquents themselves are in their consciences persuaded not only of the rectitude of their conduct, but that it is also not justly cognizable by the temporal magistrate. It seems cruel, if not tyrannical, to enact any legislative measure for their punishment, unless at least there is a popular opinion of their guilt. It may be that the chief cause of their delinquencies is to be traced to a want of sufficient industry on the part of the civil and religious authorities in labouring to produce that sentiment. If this care had been properly discharged, the disagreements which have

ripened into divisions might have been nipped in the bud, or have shown no signs of vegetation; and it cannot be strictly just to punish in others what arises from a neglect of our own duty. Besides, while the question of guilt remains undecided, while the consciences of men approve their conduct, punishment will and must appear to partake of the nature of persecution, and will naturally excite repugnance, as one of the consequences of the spirit and the love of liberty. If right and wrong are demonstrated, and generally known, then the punishment of the transgressor would become reasonable and just according to circumstances, but scarcely if possible before.

But while it appears that any direct punishment for religious divisions, till the duty of union is universally or generally acknowledged, is impolitic as well as unjust, it is at the same time equally evident that the dissenters are not to be caressed and encouraged to the detriment of the church; as if they were persons, nay, the only persons who understood and cherished true liberty or true religion. I would not persecute them one iota more than I wish to be myself persecuted. I am very unwilling, I think, naturally, even to speak of them with the least degree of severity; and though I am well convinced from Scripture, a spirit of sharpness is on some occasions not inconsistent with religious feeling, and though the dissenters have been ever attacking the church for centuries, and of late with increased virulence and impetuosity, yet I hope that I have not indulged in any expressions or sentiments which a jealousy for truth might not have allowed me very justly and piously to exceed. But while I am also heartily dis-

posed to give the right hand of fellowship to the first fugitive from the ranks of schism, whom I have been obliged most solemnly to condemn, I do no less earnestly protest against the righteousness of rewarding, at the expense of the establishment, men whose leaders stand convicted, I will not say of a spirit only of intolerance, of an incapability of logical argument, and of discovering the signification of Scripture for themselves, (for I would on no account whatever transgress the bounds of truth,) but of a disposition to a conduct which is the very reverse of liberal towards that establishment, and which has been in too many instances too faithfully pursued, and of such crude and false interpretations of writings both uninspired and inspired, and of so irrational a use of their own natural and acquired faculties in opposition to the same establishment, as show them to be instructed in such a manner that they do not deserve, as it does, the confidence of the people, and to be themselves disobedient in various ways, both to the temporal and eternal powers. The cause of liberty does not require that licentiousness of opinion and action should be recompensed with substantial benefit or airy applause, nor that the adherents to right be stigmatized as slaves or advocates of an illiberal spirit; neither is that a sound principle which deems it expedient to do evil that good may come. Righteousness only exalteth a nation, but it is too evident a fact to be denied or dissembled, that the most eminent amongst us in rank and station (totally as I disclaim all imputation of sinister intention to any of the most powerful parties of the state) number among their supporters not a few who have slaked

their thirst for knowledge in such shallow and pestilential streams, as to be at this moment prepared for the destruction of much which churchmen venerate, and which the foregoing pages will, I trust, show to be divine. And as far as such opinions and inclinations prevail, so far is there an unhealthy action in the political system; and so far is the country in danger of apostatizing from righteous principle. And it may be assumed as fact, that till the dissenters are convinced they are in error, as subverters of the establishment of the church, they will never cease to agitate the question of dissolution, "however much it may include," as they conceive it to be a duty of divine obligation. It is with no ordinary emotions of gratitude to the all-wise and merciful Inspirer of every good desire and thought, that I feel assured that there is yet virtue and intelligence sufficient in this distracted land, did it but act with the strength which union can give, to avert such a dismal and much to be deprecated catastrophe; and did it but so act, that time might be afforded for the enlightenment of the people by the ministers of both church and state, and that then we might present, if that time were well employed, an example of a happy and united nation, at least undivided by those among the most dreadful and prevalent of all causes of separation and animosity, the violent passions of religious discord.



NOTES.

NOTE (A), PAGE 27.

THE word used by St. Paul in Gal. v. 20, which is translated "seditions" is *dichostasiai*. This word is to be met with in the sense of "seditions." It is however to be believed that it means in the Epistle to the Galatians divisions of professing christians into parties, and those divisions only.

It may be useful to some of my readers to observe, that the meaning of the word *dichostasiai* is very far from being absolutely "seditions." The word is compounded of derivatives from two others. A general idea of its signification may be conveyed by the translation "separate stations," so that it may signify, according as it is used in one subject or another, separations into parties of different kinds; not only seditions, but divisions of persons in general. There are political writings in Greek where *dichostasiai* does occasionally signify "seditions," crimes against the government of a country, but this is not the most appropriate and usual term for those offences; and it may signify divisions of men into parties generally; so that there is no ground of violent presumption in criticising the word itself, that it signifies "seditions."

It will now be for us to show, that though *dichostasiai* is occasionally written for seditions in some books, in the New Testament it is intended to be understood only of divisions of professing christians into parties or sects.

The word *dichostasiai* is found, I believe, only three times in the whole of the New Testament. The three passages are—

1. In ch. v. 20 of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians.
2. In ch. iii. 3 of St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians.
3. In ch. xvi. 17 of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

Now in the two last cited places it will be seen that St. Paul means divisions among professing christians very clearly. First, as to 1 Cor. iii. 3. In several parts of this Epistle, St. Paul informs us that the Corinthians were divided into parties; one party affirming that they belonged to Paul, another to Apollos, a third to Cephas, and a fourth to Christ. These Corinthians were, it is well known, all professors of the faith. But St. Paul says of them in the text where he uses the word *dichostasiai*, that he could not speak unto them as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal. "Ye are yet carnal," he writes, "for (now he gives his reason for pronouncing them carnal) for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions (*dichostasiai*) are ye not carnal and walk as men? For (he goes on) while one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?" Nothing need be plainer, I should think, than this—that St. Paul, in using the word *dichostasiai* in this place, meant divisions among christians, and condemned them as carnal; that in short he meant divisions of professing christians into separate parties.

In one place therefore of the three where the word is used in the New Testament, *dichostasiai* means divisions or separations among the disciples of Christ. So it does certainly in another of the three places. (Rom. xvi. 17.) "Now I beseech you, brethren, (says he) mark them which cause divisions (*dichostasiai*) and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them, for they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." What is here particularly to be observed is, that *dichostasiai* are divisions among christians contrary to the doctrine of the gospel.

Now the way to argue appears to be this. The word *dichostasiai* is used only three times in the New Testament, and it is used every time by one and the same

writer, St. Paul. In two of the three passages it is evident that he certainly means divisions among professors of christianity; it is therefore to be believed that the writer intends by the word *dichostasiai*, the same thing in the other place of the three rather than anything else, unless it can be shown from that other place that it is probable he *did* mean something else by it there. Now so far from that being the case, I will show that it is credible, *from considering that place*, that he meant divisions among christians *there*, and not seditions.

The third place is Gal. v. 20. When we look at the word *dichostasiai* in this place, perhaps we do not see at first sight any reason at all for thinking that it means divisions of christians into sects. The works of the flesh are all named one after the other, and no description is given of them. There may not appear to some persons any means in these verses of ascertaining whether St. Paul meant divisions of christians or seditions. There are however very substantial reasons in these identical verses for asserting that St. Paul signified divisions, and not seditions, in the text under consideration.

One reason that it *may* be divisions among christians is this: that the character given of the *dichostasiai* in the Epistle to the Galatians is the same in kind as that ascribed to them in 1 Cor. iii. 3. In this latter place the people who are guilty of them are called carnal or fleshly, and in this verse of the Epistle to the Galatians the *dichostasiai* are called works of the flesh. It cannot be objected to our interpretation, that the character given of *dichostasiai* in the two places is different: it may therefore, as far as this consideration goes, mean the same thing in both.

But a positive argument that it more probably means divisions among christians than seditions, is that St. Paul was more likely to warn the Galatians against divisions than against seditions. For these reasons:—we do not know, and have no cause for thinking, but rather the contrary, that the Galatians were in any particular danger of rebelling against the government of the country in which they lived, and we *do* know from the Epistle, that to *divisions* the Galatians were, at the time St. Paul wrote to them, extremely liable. (ch. iii. 1, 3, 4; iv. 11, 20; v. 2, 3, 9, 15).

Another reason to be found in the verses themselves for

believing that St. Paul meant divisions, is as follows. It is very common for men who know how to write, when they make a written list of the names of things, to put those close to one another that are related to each other. Now St. Paul has so done in this list of the works of the flesh, at least in four parts out of five. The words run thus, and I will distinguish the classes by lines of demarcation: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness—idolatry, witchcraft—hatred, variance, emulations, wrath—strifes, seditions, heresies, envyings—murders, drunkenness, revellings. As St. Paul seems in this catalogue to have made some distinct classes, and as the word “heresies” stands next to the “seditions,” it is likely that divisions or schisms should be written instead of seditions, as heresies mean false unscriptural opinions, and are much connected with divisions. Men divide or separate because they take up different opinions, and because they adopt heresies.

But a fourth reason, and one which strengthens the last, is this: St. Paul has, as we have just noticed, placed *dichostasiai* in the Epistle to the Galatians in close company with strife and envyings. Now a similar collocation occurs in 1 Cor. iii. 3; he has there these words: “Whereas there is among you envying, strife, and *dichostasiai* or divisions,” &c. Therefore it is probable he had the same kind of *dichostasiai* in his mind in both places. In one (1 Cor. iii. 3,) we know he meant divisions among Christians; therefore it is credible that he did in the other. The fact is made more certain in Gal. v. 20, by the juxta-position of “heresies.”

Thus I think it appears that, from reasoning on the Epistle to the Galatians itself, it is much more likely that St. Paul meant *divisions* by *dichostasiai* in that Epistle, than seditions. Again, we have seen that he certainly meant such divisions in the only two other places where the word is used. Therefore it is reasonable to believe that he meant the same thing by the word in all three places, and therefore in Gal. v. 20; and that the word *dichostasiai* should be translated in that place, as in the two others, by “divisions.”

NOTE (B), PAGE 35.

It is worthy of inquiry and consideration, as the early church of Corinth was carnal for calling themselves, some after Paul, others after Peter, and others again after Apollos, though the three were all authorized and ordained to preach in the most undisputed manner, and never violated ecclesiastical unity themselves, how much more the people of our days must be carnal, who say, I am of Fox, and I of Wesley, and I of Brown.

NOTE (C), PAGE 39.

"It is with me, I confess, a matter of deep, serious, religious conviction, that the established church is a great national evil; that it is an obstacle to the progress of truth and godliness in the land; *that it destroys more souls than it saves*; and that therefore its end is most devoutly to be wished for by every lover of God and man." (T. Binney's Address on laying the first stone of New Kings Weigh House, 4th Edition, p. 53.) This sentiment is somewhere commended by Doctor Pye Smith. I have no exact recollection of the volume and page where the commendation occurs; but if my memory does not deceive me, he exclaims, with reference to the assertion in this extract, in words to this effect; that it is impossible to wonder at the candid confession of his warm-hearted friend Mr. Binney.

Again: "The dissolution of the existing antichristian alliance between church and state, is the object at which dissenters will aim, and aim at on serious, sacred, religious grounds, identifying it with the honour of God, the peace of his church, and the universal advantage of mankind. *This, however much it may include, is that one thing which, IN THE COMING CONFLICT, will be sought by them.*" (Binney's Address, 4th Edition, p. 63.)

NOTE (D), PAGE 39.

(For "no," read "any," p. 39, line 15.)

1. "The religious establishment of our country has been for ages wrought into the connexions and habits of the nation. To break its manifold connexion with our civil institutions in any way than by the gentle operation of conviction in the minds of its own members, would be venturing upon a dark and perhaps very perilous course." (J. Pye Smith's Appendix to a Sermon, entitled, "The necessity of Religion to the well-being of a nation." p. 29.)

2. "*Legally*, the execution of King Charles I. was a crime; but I submit to share in the condemnation of Ludlow, Hutchinson, Milton, and not a few others, for not being able to view it as *morally* a crime, upon the principles of jurisprudence and admitting the punishment of death in *any case*." (Note, page 7, in Smith's Letter to Lee. See also Genesis ix. 6.)

I cannot transcribe these passages from the works of a writer, whom churchmen as well as dissenters deem respectable, even while he holds and disseminates his present opinions, without adding a few short observations.

Mosheim, in his Ecclesiastical History, vol. V. sect. 2. part II. chap. ii. § 20, teaches that all the exertions of Charles's zeal, and the whole tenor of his administration, were directed towards the three following objects:—

1. (I abridge his expressions) to raise the power of the crown above the authority of the law. 2. To reduce all his subjects under episcopacy. 3. To take the Apostles, rather than Calvin, as his instructors in modelling the church.

Hume, the English historian, in his character of Charles I., considers that he deserved the epithet of a *good* rather than a *great man*; states, that the limitations on prerogative in his time were not settled, and signifies that under such and other circumstances, he regards his conduct as excusable.

Now I would ask Dr. Smith, after he has understood this little volume, the pursuit of which of the three great objects of Charles it was, which makes him pronounce the murder of the king no moral crime; but morally

admissible, in his view, if execution is so in *any case*,—even of course in that meant in Genesis ix. 6th verse. Probably it was the king's predilection for episcopacy, that is, his duty to God. It surely, much as Doctor Smith may venerate Calvin for his peculiarities, could not be for desiring to be in doctrine, &c. apostolical and primitive. And if it were his propensity to absolute power (I am not disposed to defend the monarch in all his acts or all his intentions—I believe he erred, but) I will confront Doctor Smith with the sentiments of one of our most erudite writers of history, and remind him that Hume characterizes him as a good man, and excusable as king; and, if this celebrated historian knew English history better than Doctor Smith, and is to be believed, I will add, a most ill used man long before the termination of his miserable career. I am sure that no being of common humanity can read the first few pages of the history of Charles's reign by that elegant and learned writer, without being shocked almost beyond expression at the conduct of the Commons' Parliament. In judging a quarrel, it is a good and established maxim to inquire into its origin. See then in Charles, on his accession to the throne, an amiable man, a prince, generous and artless, summoning and confiding in his Parliament, in want of large supplies to conduct a war in which he was involved by his people, and of which they were pledged to the support, and see the most famous members of that Parliament instantly refuse him succour in his need, because they deemed him to inherit a too unlimited prerogative, and because they wished to torture him into concessions, by taking advantage of his dependent situation. What just and humane man, if this account be true, would doubt who were to be condemned, at least at the outset (that critical moment) of the unhappy dissensions with which this country was lacerated? And, to sum up the course of his reign in one word, Hume also, in the character of the prince, says, "After the event, when it is commonly easy to correct all errors, one is at a loss to determine what conduct, in his circumstances, could have maintained the authority of the crown, and preserved the peace of the nation. Exposed, without revenue and without arms, to the assault of furious, implacable, and bigoted factions,

it was never permitted him, but with the most fatal consequences, to commit the smallest mistake—a condition too rigorous to be imposed on the greatest human capacity." Such, according to the historian, was the king whom Dr. Smith thinks it moral illegally to kill, and such were the people whom he commends as his moral executioners. I must confess, that if I have any generous feelings within me, they sink with inexpressible melancholy at the thought of such unnatural sentiment in any man, and much more in an assumed preacher of the gospel. I see from Doctor Smith, in the first quotation out of his writings given above, that there is a way of overcoming even the prejudices of a multitude, "by the gentle operation of conviction on the mind," and that it is to be encouraged, when it would be venturing on a dark and perhaps very perilous course to attempt any other mode of conversion. My religion tells me that it was by experiments "in the gentle operation of conviction," to which the people by their representatives ought to have had recourse in the reign of Charles, to correct any of the political errors with which he might be justly chargeable, even though it were not dark and perhaps very perilous for the nation to have adopted other measures. Dr. Smith's religion is of that nature, that he regards it as a moral act to put to death without law a king, and a king of the character and under the circumstances which history has above described. He has no hesitation in sanctioning such destruction of prejudices, when it is not venturing on a dark and perhaps very perilous course.

Doctor Smith may have been betrayed into the expression of execrable sentiments, by his fear that he could not justify the Revolution of 1688, if he did not vindicate the execution of Charles; for he says, immediately afterwards, "If I were to condemn the principle of the resistance to King Charles I., I should be unable to justify King William III., and the Revolution," &c. Doctor Smith perhaps, if he reflects, may be able to justify a national resistance to James II., and the succession of William III. after his abdication, and even a resistance to Charles I., without justifying the resistance which the people offered, or the bloody principle and issue of that resistance: but I fear it was not this difficulty which

drove the Doctor on the rock of the regicide. For the tyrannical principle of dissuading from separation by any other than the gentle operation, &c. is found in quite a distinct portion of his writings, and refers to other events. If the passages we have reviewed, declare the principles of Doctor Smith, and if we are to judge of many dissenters by this great heresiarch, as we fear we may by the violence of the hostile manifestations of his inferiors, may the Almighty forbid that they ever obtain the ascendant in this land of freedom. Terrific would be their toleration.

NOTE (E), PAGE 39.

1. The "Christian Advocate," a dissenting Journal, writes as follows: "We may rest assured, that until this, or something like this, has been effected, we shall stand no chance with the established parson-ocracy. We must fight and conquer them in detail before we shall overthrow them in the mass. A guerilla warfare must precede the storming of the citadel."

2. From a book entitled the "Tombs of the Prophets," by Mr. R. M. Beverley. (Preface.) "A shilling pamphlet against five millions sterling, (annually received by the clergy for not preaching the gospel,) are great odds."

He calls the Church of England, "the great whore." He quotes several texts of Scripture which spoke of the sufferings of Christians in the early times, and of the duty of patience in tribulation; and then, as if men could not be Christians unless they were afflicted and persecuted; or as if there were no piety and devotion experienced, no affliction and persecution suffered, by churchmen; as if, indeed, it has not been the practice of dissenters to speak evil of us for ages; he says, "The Church of England, on this account, is not the Church of Christ."

"What is said of us the believers? 'Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are they that mourn; blessed are the meek; blessed are ye when men shall speak all man-

ner of evil against you *falsely*,' &c. If, then, the church consists of persons who are *not* meek, who are *not* poor in spirit, who do *not* mourn, whom *no one persecutes*, &c. it is clear that such a church cannot be the body of Christ; but as it, in every respect, contradicts that which is predicated of the true church, it follows, as an inevitable consequence, that it must be a body of antichrist. And such a church is the Church of England, which rests entirely upon acts of Parliament and brute force; which is supported by violence, and exists by violence; for every farthing of money that is paid into the Babylonian treasury, in the way of tithe, is by violence, and is only paid because men know very well that if it is not paid, there will soon be marshalled against them a posse of constables, with warrants and other tender mercies of the great whore, &c. The wife of antichrist is both a hypocrite and a thief; talks of mercy and charity, but tithes mint, anise, and cummin,—tithing she does to the uttermost farthing."

"The Church of England must soon fall, because the people's voice is against it."

These observations are almost beneath criticism. But in addition to the last paragraph but two, I will answer, that though there is, to my knowledge, some truth in the insinuation, that dissenters would not pay tithe to the clergy, unless they were compelled by the officers of the law, yet that I believe the passage which alludes to the compulsory payment is a libel upon the great body of the tithe-payers; but that if it were true that none would pay without legal compulsion, it is sufficient to reply, in some of the words of Scripture, though not exactly in its sense, that "the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, (1 Tim. i. 9); or, more properly speaking, "that rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil." (Rom. xiii. 3.)

As to the ironical declaration, of the odds of a shilling pamphlet to £5,000,000 sterling, the writer had too much reason to know that five hundred millions sterling, received by the clergy *for preaching the gospel*, would be small odds against a PENNY pamphlet of such abuse as the above, if it were written for persons who think it might help them to put those millions into their own purses.

NOTE (F), PAGE 40.

I refer to one or two conspicuous instances.

"Should the Church of England be termed 'the crimson whore of Canterbury,' 'the master-work of the devil's contrivance,' 'the Juggernaut of England,' 'the corrupter of the whole frame of society,' 'a conspicuous apostacy,' 'the whore of Babylon,' 'Antichrist,' 'the Babylonian woman,' 'the mother of harlots;' and her clergy be designated 'her heathen and popish caste of priests,' 'masquerading wolves,' 'belly gods,' 'black-footed locusts,' and 'murderers,' with scores of such charitable epithets, which I could readily produce, I suppose it will be said that they have merely been 'blurted forth' at a dissenting meeting in some obscure town." At an annual meeting of the Ecclesiastical Knowledge Society, held in London, the *chairman* cried out against the church, amidst a burst of applause, "Down! down! down with the old hag!!!" Was this blurted forth at a dissenting meeting in some obscure town? Was this deeply reprobated by the leaders, or highly applauded? If the leaders are not connected with the Ecclesiastical Knowledge Society, where are they to be found? (From a Letter (p. 40,) by the Rev. M. A. Gathercole, a minister of the church, formerly a dissenter, in reply to Mr. Lushington, a churchman, and a member of Parliament, who had written in support of the separatists from the establishment.)

2. A Doctor J. Baldwin Brown, who was in the chair at one of the meetings of the Ecclesiastical Knowledge Society, said, "It is because a man is a member of a state church that he has a right to look down upon me, or to walk into a room before me."—*Brit. Mag.* June, 1835, pp. 704, 705.

If there were any gentleman of rank among the dissenting ministers, he would be entitled to take precedence of a clergyman, without hereditary or acquired distinctions. The fact is, that persons of quality are very rare among dissenters of any class. It is to be feared, that Doctor Brown was not under the influence of that Spirit which teaches Christians not to desire the "first places at feasts."

It appears that this dissenter is not at all disposed to think it necessary for what he deems the true church to be a suffering one, as Mr. Beverley does.

NOTE (G), PAGE 41.

At a meeting of dissenters, held at Cottenham, one of them delivered himself as follows: "The Church of England is the synagogue of Satan, and so far antisciptural and antichristian, that it will one day or other be destroyed by the breath of God. The grossest corruption and bloodshed may be traced to the establishment, which had been raised by the pride of man, and not by Scripture. I also object (continues he) to the Church of England, because of the means used to support it: for in every ten years, the entire produce of the land for a year is eaten up by the black-footed locusts; and the parties who principally consume this revenue are the bloated archbishops and bishops, the lazy deans and subdeans, and the useless canons and prebendaries. Again, it must be remembered that every doctrine and prayer of the Church is prescribed by the state, and if the whole clergy throughout the kingdom were to be directed on a certain Sunday to fall down and worship an ass, they would be compelled to do it." This is moderate; but hear another of these pious and worthy dissenting orators: "I wish to God that I had this evening to preach the funeral sermon of that hoary harlot, Mother Church, which is a blast and nuisance upon the earth, both black, bloody, and useless; and I will say, blessed be those hands that shall first hurl her to dark perdition among the friends there, to be honouring, and to be honoured by the devil." (Extract from the Cambridge Chronicle, April, 1834, copied from Mr. Gathercole's letters, (L. S. E.) preface, p. xvi. xvii. 3rd edition.)

It may be thought this must be enough to satisfy Mr. Beverley, that we are one of the truest churches on the earth.

NOTE (H), PAGE 41.

Extract from a letter of an Independent minister to the editor of the Record Newspaper.

"It is correct that there are 'political agitators' among the dissenters; but I take leave to assure you, that if you imagine such persons to be numerous among the ministers of our persuasion, you labour under a most serious mistake."

"While the pen is in my hand, will you permit me to state, that there is a class of us to whom you refer, who are much misunderstood and misrepresented, solely because we have firmly resolved not to adopt and pursue a certain order of public methods of proclaiming our opinions upon the passing events of the times. We are convinced that we are forbidden by the gospel which we profess, to employ vituperation, invective, and biting sarcasm, as the means of effecting the most legitimate ends. We think that, excepting on rare occasions, it is well for the ministers of the gospel of peace to abstain from political intermeddlings; having observed, that when they have become intense partisans, they have usually lost much of the spirit of their great Master, and have cast a withering blight over their ministerial usefulness. We cannot see the consistency of those christian instructors who are loud in their censures upon the clergy, for mixing themselves up with political elections, when they eagerly seize every rising opportunity to sit on electioneering committees, and to canvass for their favourite candidate, whether Whig or Tory, with an ardour of zeal which it is desirable for them rather to expend in winning souls to Christ. It is also our own persuasion, that there is a more excellent way of promoting the cause of sound and catholic congregational dissent, than that which some moderns pursue—a kind of politico-religious agitation; nor have we the slightest disinclination to be placed in open comparison with those noisy boasters, who are fond of telling us how little we have done for the dissenting interest, as to the efficiency of our labours,

and the extent of our sacrifice to promote the sacred cause."

"These few explanatory remarks may suffice for the present to protect some of us from the charge of timidity and cowardice, as though we were afraid or ashamed, on proper occasions, to avow and vindicate our sentiments. It is quite possible to be decided for moderation, as well as in the maintenance and promulgation of extreme opinions; and of this I am well assured, that it often requires more self-denial and self-control to abstain from expressing our views on some public opportunities, than to harangue an excited multitude, when we are certain of receiving the immediate hosannah of popular applause.

"Disapproving of the meanness and pusillanimity which too often shelter themselves beneath anonymous communications, I subscribe myself, sir, yours most respectfully,

"JOHN CLAYTON, JUN.

"*Chapel-House, Poultry, Feb. 13, 1835.*"

See *St. James' Chronicle*, Feb. 21 to Feb. 24, 1835.

NOTE (I), PAGE 54.

The words rendered "to the end of the world," are, without doubt, rightly translated, as appears from the 13th chapter of St. Matthew, where the same phrase occurs three times, referring to the general judgment which was to take place at the end of the world. (See verses 39, 40, 49.) It is also used in the same sense chap. xxiv. 3. Had the Evangelist intended to make *αἶων* refer to the lives of the Apostles, as Schleusner and others do, he undoubtedly would have added the word *ὑμῶν* to *αἶωνος*. Besides, I cannot find the word so used by St. Matthew, in that sense he uses *γένηα*; and the passage quoted by Schleusner, Matt. xii. 32, appears to me to be directly against his interpretation, and to prove that *αἶων* is always referred by him to the destruction of the world. It is also deserving of remark, that in his explanation of the word *συντέλεια*, Schleusner translates

this very passage, (chap. xxviii. 20,) "interitus mundi,"—as numerous are the objections to the interpretation that this passage refers to the destruction of Jerusalem. It cannot surely be possible that Christ, sending his disciples to preach the gospel to the heathen nations, should only promise his presence with them till the Jewish church was subverted, and not continue his support after its subversion, when the churches of the Gentiles were chiefly to be erected. Besides, how could this promise be fulfilled to the Apostles, who died before the destruction of Jerusalem? or had St. John, who outlived that period, no participation in its benefits? or are we, as we must, if we understand the promise as limited to the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, to suppose that St. John had the assistance of his divine master till that period, and then lost it? And it ought to be remembered, that St. John continued to govern the church, and ordain bishops, after the fall of Jerusalem, and the supposed cessation of this promise. "Notandum est ergo (to use the words of Calvin) non solis Apostolicis hoc esse dictum, quia non in unam modò ætatem, sed usque ad finem mundi dominus auxilium suum promittit." (Calvin, Comm. ad loc.) Note 2, appended to a Sermon preached at the consecration of the Right Reverend Thomas, Lord Bishop of Limerick, by Charles R. Elrington, D.D. Dublin, Miliken, 1820.

It will be observed by the reader, that Dr. Elrington probably, from consulting an early edition of his work, has considered Schleusner an opponent of his interpretation in two instances. In the 4th edition, printed at Edinburgh in 1814, the learned philologist most decidedly supports the same opinions as those maintained against his assumed authority by Dr. Elrington.

Dr. Elrington has also affixed on τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος, in Matt. xxiv. 3, a sense, to which, notwithstanding opinions which I advocate in a following part of this work, I can most readily subscribe. The Jews who asked the question, most probably associated the destruction of their temple with the end of the world; and, doubtless, there are several expressions used in the chapters, relative to the subversion of the Jewish polity, intended to be referred to that period.

NOTE (K), PAGE 119.

Per "in ultimis diebus" intelligi ultimos dies Hierosolymæ atque Œconomix Judaicæ observavimus alibi, nempe cùm appropinquaret jam τέλος τοῦ αἰῶνος Ἰουδαϊκῶν. (Vide Matt. xxiv. 3, and 1 Cor. x. 11.) Et de hac re minùs dubitaretur si rectè judicaretur, quisnam sit dies ille Domini magnus et terribilis, dies scilicet vindictæ ejus in istam gentem, quem terrorem Judæi, pro more suo, à se alienant, et devolvunt in Gog et Magog excidendos. (LIGHTFOOT, *Hor. Heb. in Act. Apost. ii. 17.*)

NOTE (L), PAGE 136.

I have advocated, in pp. 125, 126, the opinion, that 2 Thess. ii. 2, 3, 8, refers, in part at least, to the destruction of Jerusalem. I would here remark on an objection which I know not if I ever saw answered. It has been doubted, that St. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians concerning an event in which they had no interest. It may be replied, that the signal judgment of God upon the Jewish nation, was not improbably an event highly interesting to the Thessalonians. It appears, from Acts xvii. 1—15, that there was a synagogue of Jews at Thessalonica, not many years before the fall of Jerusalem,—a most intolerant congregation too. An humiliation of the party (if it persevered, as it probably did, in its pertinacious spirit of persecution,) by the divine judgments on the nation, might be one instance of the promised "redemption." To which it may be added, as noted elsewhere in this volume, that St. Paul and St. Peter certainly predicted the destruction of Jerusalem at Rome; and I see not any reason why that circumstance should be more interesting to the Romans than the Thessalonians.

I take this opportunity of supplying an observation inadvertently omitted in the interpretation (p. 27) of Jam. v. 1—3. I mean, that the fatality of the time, in which the

rich men had unjustly withheld the wages of the labourers, may be accounted for, not only by the ruin of property in the forthcoming desolation, but also by their being themselves severed from their possessions in the general massacre.

It ought to be noted in general, on the argument for the prophesying in Acts ii. 17, being confined to the last days of Jerusalem, or thereabouts, that even if it were not certain that the "last days" were such as I have interpreted them to be, that our conclusion is established solely by the interpretation of "the great and terrible day of the Lord."

NOTE (M), PAGE 196.

I notice, that when dissenters wish to defend the popular election of ministers of the word, they do not object to implying that deacons were preachers, but that they at other times maintain they were not. Our church sufficiently determines the question.

NOTE (N), PAGE 203.

The heresy in contemplation was that of the Gnostics, who, for one thing, denied that Christ appeared in a real body. It was against them that the rule of the Apostle was particularly directed.

NOTE (O), PAGE 318.

For other arguments in defence of state ecclesiastical establishments, see Dr. Dealtry's Sermon, "Religious Establishments tried by the Word of God;" also, "The

Argument for National Church Establishments stated," published by the Committee of the Established Church Society—and other cheap publications.

NOTE (P), PAGE 318.

See Dr. Dealtry's Sermon, entitled, "Religious Establishments tried by the Word of God," p. 51, note.

Dr. Dealtry remarks, with reference to the successful labours of the missionaries to the South-Sea Islands, that the reader of their statements can scarcely fail to be struck with the manner in which they were assisted by the native kings and chiefs, and the happy effect of that interference on the general population; and shows, by extracts from different works, that the missionaries themselves, and the representatives of the London Missionary Society, approved of the conduct of King Pomare in banishing the national idol, abolishing idolatry, manifesting zeal for the *establishment* of Christianity, employing his influence for the propagation of the gospel, enjoining all classes to give heed to the things spoken to them by their teachers, &c.;—that they sought and obtained endowments of lands; that Mr. Nott, the senior missionary, acted as president of the formal parliament of the Windward Islands in 1824; that he prepared beforehand the draft of the code of laws; that he officiated at the coronation of Pomare III., placing the crown upon his head, &c. The missionaries who thus acted were dissenters,—the Society which sent them out, and whose representatives approved their conduct, is composed of dissenters; and yet the dissenters maintain, that the civil magistrate ought not to interfere with religion, or ministers of religion with affairs of state; and that they ought not to be supported by endowments, but by the voluntary contributions of their flock. (Notes to the Rev. W. P. Spencer's Sermon, preached in Norwich Cathedral, 1834.)

NOTE (Q), PAGE 322.

Extract from a Sermon before the Auxiliary Education Society of the Young Men of Boston, by Samuel Farmar Jarvis, D.D., Rector of St. Paul's Church, Boston, 1822.

After making a fearful statement of the infinite disproportion between the population of the United States, and the number of their religious teachers, he proceeds. But gloomy as this picture is, the statements to which I refer do not exhibit the subject in its darkest aspect.

After a brief statement of the mode in which the North American settlements were colonized, he says, "At the very commencement, therefore, of the political existence of the colonies, they were made up of the most discordant materials, as it regarded religion. And when our independence was achieved, and our union formed, it became necessary, as a measure of sound policy, for the constitution of our national government, only to tolerate, and not to support Christianity. It became necessary, in order to blend together the heterogeneous mass, to prevent the collisions of religious parties from having any sway over the public councils, by excluding religion itself. It became necessary to banish that subject, which, of all others, ought to be most interesting to men in every station of life, because the corruptions of the human heart, and the errors of the human understanding, here rent asunder the body of Christ.

"This single measure has altered the whole aspect of affairs; the constitution of the general government immediately became a model for the constitution of the several states. Thus a force was created which sapped the foundations of all establishments; and though the religious institutions of Massachusetts and Connecticut have been seated deep in the habits and affections of the people, yet the constantly accumulating power of this formidable lever has at length heaved them from their base. It is now left to men, as individuals, to associate for the purpose of supporting public worship, as they would associate for the promotion of any object merely of private and worldly interest. In our cities and other large and populous places, this may be done: enough

may be found already united in sentiment, to unite in the formation of a congregation. But when you look beyond them and contemplate the small villages and hamlets, the population of which is thinly scattered over an area of many miles, you behold the same divisions rending society into shreds and patches, various in texture and form and colouring. The few of each religious denomination cannot agree to worship together, and are unable, from the smallness of their number, to support separate places of worship. The consequence is, they are left destitute of the means of religion. The sanctity of the Lord's day is either violated by an attention to worldly concerns, or is observed in a manner worse than the violation, by being made the occasion of idleness and vice. In this part of our country religion was supported by law, until it became the habit of the community; and therefore it still continues to act with the force of an establishment, as a wheel continues to turn after the force applied to it is stopped. Yet even here we are beginning to feel the evils arising from division, and to feel them severely. Your parishes are crumbling into ruins: party is arrayed against party. To settle a minister becomes impracticable; or if two or more are settled, the scanty pittance given for their support obliges them to escape from the horrors of poverty by a removal. If it be so here, what must it be in our newly settled territories, where religion has no nursing fathers or nursing mothers? One clergyman, it is said, is necessary for every thousand souls. Be it so; but when it is remembered that this thousand may be composed of five or six different denominations, it will be seen at once how the divisions of the christian community, by increasing its wants, increase the difficulty of supplying them."

He then concludes a passage of great beauty of expression, but painful sentiment. "As our population increases therefore, the prospect is shrouded by a more portentous gloom, and there is great danger that, with all the exertions which the pious and benevolent can make, we shall become a nation of heathens, and not of christians." (Abridged from a note to an Essay on the supposed existence of a quadripartite and tripartite division of tithes in England, by the Rev. William Hale Hale., M.A.)

The same work (p. 48—50) contains a copious extract from the 49th number of the "New York Protestant," in attestation of the great increase and progress in North America, of Popery.

Of the Western country it is said by an American writer, that in the rural congregations "it is seldom that a minister is stationary for more than *two months*. A ministry of a year in one place may be considered beyond the common duration. Nine-tenths of the religious instruction of the country is given by people who itnerate." (Flint's History and Geography of the Mississippi Valley, published 1832.) "The people think in general that attendance upon preaching sufficiently compensates the minister. No minister of any protestant denomination, to my knowledge, has ever received a sufficient living two years in succession." (Flint's Recollections of the last ten years in the Valley of Mississippi.) The condition of the Northern states forms a still better illustration of the matter. The states formerly enjoyed an endowed religious establishment: the consequences of its abolition may be learned from the following account. "A few years since, in New Hampshire, the towns of Newington, Greenland, Stratham, Newmarket, and Durham, had all settled congregational ministers; now they are in a destitute and broken state. There yet remain a considerable number who are disposed to maintain religious order, and a few friends to evangelical truth, who are famishing for the sincere milk of the word. *But a small proportion of the people are disposed to raise money to support pious, regular, and well instructed preachers.* In the counties of Rockingham and Strafford there are 45 towns, which, with their inhabitants, 40,286 souls, are destitute of the stated means of grace: of these 45 towns, some have been destitute ten, some twenty, some thirty, some forty years. In some towns, where churches exist, the Lord's Supper has not for ten, twenty, or thirty years, been once administered. Most of these churches are also much reduced in number: one from sixty-two members to two females; several to but one male member; and in one town, containing 1063 souls, the visible church of Christ, after a stated ministry of twenty-eight years, has been many years totally extinct." (Report of Massachussetts' Society for promoting Chris-

tian Knowledge. The third Report of the American Society for educating pious youths for the ministry, reaching to September 1818, states, the whole number of competent religious teachers in the United States, of *all denominations*, to be 2500, the population of the United States being "about 9,000,000." The American Home Missionary Society says, in 1827. "Not much less than half the population of these United States is at this day to an alarming degree destitute of the regular administration of gospel ordinances." (Extracted from a pamphlet described under Note O. The author not being yet able to procure the volume, can only add, that there are numerous authorities for recommending a work on the state of religion in America, by the Rev. Mr. Lorimer of Glasgow, as replete with most valuable information. See also "Essays on the Church, by a Layman.")

NOTE (R), PAGE 339.

The late Mr. Cobbett appears to have drawn such inferences from the imperfect success attendant on the labours of the episcopal ministry, as to have proposed an amendment of the law of Christ with as much self-sufficiency as of a parliamentary motion. Instead of a church, he suggests, if I am rightly informed, the substitution of a system of schools. This would be superseding the divine obligation of "obeying those who have the rule over you," with a vengeance; but no doubt, in a reforming age, his idea is highly acceptable to all who are no better theologians and ecclesiastics than their master. I freely confess however, that I should have great difficulty in believing that that writer ever published the proposal, did I not know his fame for inconsistency. What a consolation is it, in the circulation of almost every imaginable opinion hostile to the church, that it stands an edifice on a rock, which the gates of hell shall ever be unable to demolish.

NOTE (S), PAGE 337.

The writer alluded to may have imagined the word *sect*, as applied to Christians, to signify the followers of any particular master, in consideration of its Latin derivation, or he may have taken the idea from some English dictionary. The truth is, that this is not the true meaning of the word in Scripture. It signifies there a heresy, a party who have adopted opinions and practices in opposition to those which have been established by God.

NOTE (T), PAGE 338.

The mind naturally turns in this place on the vehemently agitated question, which at present divides the legislative assemblies of this nation, respecting the disposal of church property in Ireland. On the consequent insecurity of property in general, were the appropriation clause to pass into law, I will not presume to offer an opinion. I claim however my right to affirm, that if it is the duty of government to establish an episcopal church at all, and if one such church is incalculably more in conformity to the Scriptures than another, that it is its duty to establish the church of the purer creeds and formularies; and that there is that difference between the Churches of England and Rome, is a fact which nothing but a most lamentable want of information in these times of confusion can deny. I have not to learn that we must not affiliate upon the latter church all the deplorable errors of her individual members. But there is quite enough in her most established and authentic documents to justify the accusation, and to render it a most solemn and imperative duty not to pay or reward her supporters. I would instance the doctrine of transubstantiation, as alone sufficient to warrant the determination in a protestant people of withholding from the church pecuniary support. That transubstantiation is a doctrine of the Romish church, is beyond all question. (See Creed of

Pope Pius IV. Catechism of Council of Trent, Sess. xiii. cap. 1, 2, 4.) And it is equally certain that that church believes by this doctrine, that the consecrated wafer or bread in the eucharist contains truly, really, and substantially, the body and blood of Christ, together with his soul and divinity; or as it has been otherwise expressed, the body and blood of Christ, his bones and sinews, and consequently his very soul and divinity likewise. The church worships what appears like bread accordingly. And faith in this doctrine is the great test of popery.

I ask, how it is possible for *protestants*, who believe that this must be a most awful delusion, inasmuch as it is to worship a piece of bread as God, to think that it is not infinitely offensive to him to bestow endowments on a church which makes it one of its cardinal tenets.

But I have in view another object, which is to offer a brief confutation of the grand argument on which the doctrine is maintained by the Romish priesthood, in the hope that it may be useful both to the Papist and the Protestant.

Mr. Maguire, the Roman Catholic priest, in his controversy with Mr. Pope at Dublin in 1827, introducing this subject, said—"I sincerely trust that, in the course of this day's discussion, my friend will not make use of any expression which would be, according to my principles, an absolute blasphemy against the Son of God. A regard for the feelings of the devout papist, will, I trust, forbid my indulging in what he deems 'useless and profane sarcasms.'"

The argument on which the belief in transubstantiation is principally founded, may be thus divided.

1. That though what the British Protestant holds to be bread after the consecration, looks, and tastes, and smells, and feels to the Roman Catholic as much like bread as it did before; yet that a miracle was performed upon the bread when blessed by the priest, and that the substance is then to be believed to be Christ's body and blood, in opposition to the senses.

2. That Christ actually said, as he held the substance in his hand, "This is my body." We will examine both these parts of the argument.

1. The first depends upon the assumption of the actual performance of a miracle, in contradiction to the decision of our senses.

Now if we examine the New Testament for every miraculous external change wrought on an object of sense, as bread is, and literally recorded as miraculous in that volume, and if we consider how men were to judge in such a *certain* case that a miracle was performed, it will always appear that the judgment was determined by the use of the natural senses. It is evident to every believer in Scripture, that miracles were exhibited to the people by Christ and the Apostles; and it appears that all those external ones which are described as miracles in Scripture, were themselves objects of the senses, that in all such *certainly known* miracles, the people might always be *sensibly* convinced that the course of nature had been interrupted. One or more of the senses of men were constituted the judges of the actual performance of the supernatural work, as for example in the conversion of the water into wine: the fact was known by the sight and the taste. According to Scripture, the senses are not only very proper, but the sole judges as to the question of the execution of a professed external miracle. Now our senses, if consulted, would inform us, that the bread blessed by the priest has not undergone any substantial change—certainly not into flesh and blood; and therefore (as far as Scripture warrants us to decide by our senses) it has not been so converted. If it be argued by the Roman Catholic, that there may be, for anything we know to the contrary, some substantial change wrought in sensible objects, without its being perceptible to the senses, although all those external miracles recorded in Scripture are so perceptible; it is answered, that we must have some much stronger reason to believe that there has been a change of the bread into flesh and blood, than the bare conjectural possibility of it, in order to overcome the plain and positive decision of our senses against its actually having been effected. The judgment of our senses in opposition to that change, is much more convincing than the supposition of its being possible is in favour of it. A reason, however, the Roman Catholics profess to give in our Saviour's having said of what he held in his

hand, "This is my body;" and this brings us to the second branch of our subject.

2. The Roman Catholic says, that it is as plain as possible that our Saviour in these words instructs us that that was his body which was in his hand. It is usual for the Protestant to answer, that our Saviour did not really mean it was his body, but that it represented his body; that he spoke figuratively, in the same manner as he did when he said, "I am the door;" and this has I believe been considered as almost a sufficient answer. It was this reply which Mr. Pope gave to Mr. Maguire in their famous controversy: but Mr. Maguire disputed the sufficiency of it. He argued that it by no means followed that our Saviour spoke figuratively of his body, as he did of himself under the idea of a door. Mr. Maguire affirmed, truly enough, that if our Saviour had laid his hand upon a door and said, "I am *this* door," we should then have been convinced no figure was intended, and that his meaning was literal. In advancing this indisputable assertion, Mr. Maguire signified that the sentence "This is my body" is analogous to "I am *this* door," and not to "I am the door;" and that "I am *this* door" would be literal, therefore "this is my body" must be also literally understood. Mr. Pope, possibly surprised by an objection which he had never heard before, and of which he could not immediately detect the fallacy in the heat of debate, omits, as far I have been able to observe all notice of it in his reply. But, startling as the quibble may be at first sight, a little examination soon discovers its absurdity. Our opponents seem to me to have bewildered themselves with the use of the demonstrative "this." They appear to think that its presence in both of the sentences, "I am *this* door," and "This is my body," stamps them with analogy. The fact is, it does no such thing. Analysing these few words, and leaving the disputed doctrine for a moment out of the question, which we are at liberty, or rather are bound in strict propriety to do, when we are considering whether the words "This is my body" must abstractedly mean as the Roman Catholics understand them, and can mean nothing else,—analysing the words on this principle, I observe that the subject (I) and the predicate (this door) of the proposition "I am *this* door,"

are both definite terms. "I" represents definitely the speaker, and no other person, and "this door" represents the door laid hold of, and "no other door." Taking the words abstractedly by themselves, they can signify nothing else. But not so with "this is my body," taken thus abstractedly. It is evident that the *subject* here (this) is not a definite term, as the subject in the other sentence. "This is my body," (as far as the words in themselves go, and that is the point the Roman Catholic insists upon) may signify simply, that this which I hold in my hand is my body; or this, which I hold and which you see, is bread, is my body. It may mean one or the other; it may mean only "this is my body," or "this bread is my body;" which latter meaning is certainly figurative. Confining our view to the bare abstract phrase, it may admit of either of these interpretations. The first sentence, "I am this door," admits of but one interpretation. "This is my body," is capable of two. So far, then, the two sentences are *not* analogous, and we are not to be restricted to only one mode of interpretation of "This is my body," by there being only one construction to be put on "I am this door;" and as there is a choice of interpretations in the words, "This is my body," we prefer that which is alone agreeable to reason, experience, and the rest of Scripture; and declare, that "this is my body" signifies, this bread is my body, or is figuratively its representative.

It is important also to observe, that it is agreeable to the idiom of the language in which our Saviour spoke, to use "is" for "represents," there being no word for "represents" contained in its vocabulary.

These arguments would satisfy perhaps but few Roman Catholics who may read and understand them, because of their belief in the infallibility of their church. But could they once bring their minds to consider the absurdity of any number of fallible members making one infallible body, and to exercise their rational faculties with freedom, it is presumed that, short as the above examination is, it might be sufficient to show them the awful error into which they have fallen.

Such, in short, appears to me, as a Protestant, the fearful unscripturality of several of the Romish doctrines, that I agree entirely with those statesmen and divines

who regard the Protestant ministry in Ireland as a missionary establishment, with respect to the Roman Catholics, and think that if there were not one Protestant in a parish besides the minister, yet that he should be appointed to labour within its limits, and that if he labours faithfully and diligently, he is, in every sense of the words, worthy of his hire.

NOTE (U), PAGE 365.

"It appears to me the very climax of inconsistency for dissenters to keep up a hue and cry about grievances that nobody feels, and perpetuate a clamour for religious liberty of which nobody is deprived."—Extract from a letter by a dissenting minister, Mr. Joseph Irons, pastor at Grove-chapel, Camberwell,—a gentleman whose congregation contributed £58 1s. 2d. in 1836 to the relief of the clergy of the Irish church; and who expressed several sentiments in the letter, of which the above is an extract, reflecting high honour on his heart and understanding; and inducing a momentary forgetfulness of his violation of the divine law of church-membership, on the same human principle of private judgment as has produced almost every species of religious error.

I admit, in this place, a brief examination of two or three errors, one of which is so prevalent among the unlearned, that it ought probably, on that account, to have been noticed in the text. St. Paul, in writing to the Corinthian Christians (2 Cor. vi. 17), gives this injunction: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate." In these words the Apostle commands his disciples to renounce the society of the heathens, in consequence of their infidelity and wickedness. Many unlearned professors of Christ's religion, in these days, make this an argument for deserting the church, on account of the alleged immorality and

profaneness of many of its nominal members. I will devote a small space to the proof, 1. that if the allegation of the wickedness of nominal churchmen be ever so true, it is not agreeable to the **LETTER** of this commandment to separate from the church in consequence, nor 2. to its *spirit*.

1. It is not agreeable to the *letter* of the commandment. The Apostle certainly did not command the Roman christians to separate from the church because of the heathens joining in its worship. There is no reason for thinking that the heathens attended the religious assemblies of the church. The christians and heathens were mixed in society, but it was not by the heathens coming over to them,—it was by the christians making too much advance towards the heathen; it was by associating with them in the world. The intercourse appears not to have been in the religious meetings of heathens or christians; it is not very probable that either a professed heathen would have worshipped with the christian, or the believer in Christ with the idolator. The fact appears to be, indeed, that the society existed in private life: as much as that is signified in Scripture. And the error on the part of the christians was, that they accepted the proffered hospitality of their idolatrous neighbours. The christians had transgressed the bounds of propriety. They were the party to retreat, by leaving the heathen to themselves. This is evidently a very different statement of facts, to the heathen frequenting the worship of the christians, and the christians being obliged to forsake the worship of God and Christ in their own temples, by the intrusion of unbelievers and reprobates. The christian is, no doubt, as much bound now as then to renounce the private friendship of the most profane livers; and this commandment in particular will support him in that act of separation. It however, in its letter, has no reference whatever to wicked men making their way into the religious meetings of the christians, and thus compelling them to seek a sanctuary in a separate place of assembly.

2. And, secondly, it is inconsistent with the *spirit* and intention of the commandment, altogether, that christians should leave the church by reason of the immorality or impiety of any of its professed adherents.

In the first place, it is very possible that wicked men may hear the word of God in the same house as the most religious, without the latter being guilty of any misde-meanour in such joint adoration. The religious man does not in this case seek the society of the wicked. He has not made any improper advances towards him, as in this case of the Corinthians; he has not professed a friendship for him, or associated with him on terms of intimacy, so that it is his duty to retrace his steps. The bad man has indeed joined publicly the society of the good, but not as his friend and acquaintance; and that man must be a very abominable character indeed who is not permitted to hear the word of God in a public meeting with the most righteous, and whom the righteous might not rather rejoice to observe in attendance on that worship by which he might be reclaimed from errors. But, it may be asked, are there not persons who call themselves churchmen, with whom we ought neither to communicate, nor to worship? Both cases are very possible, most particularly the former. It is indeed very common. But if it be insinuated, that therefore the most zealous, and those who have the highest ideas of their own holiness, must, according to the words of St. Paul, leave the church, nothing can be more absurd and perverse. It is not in this way that God intends the good christian to be parted in worship from the bad. Is it, in the first place, I would ask, at all likely, that God should have appointed one course of ministry for men to hear, and that he should have ordained things so that bad men's attending that ministry should have the effect of turning the good away from it? in that case, the Almighty Founder of the church would have left it in the power of a few evil men, in any place, to subvert it, in opposition to the faithful christian. He would have commanded men to unite with the church; and, at the same time, left them bound to forsake it if evil men came into it. This is a contradiction which we cannot impute to God. The good are, no doubt, in such cases as we have supposed, to separate from the bad. But it is not in the way contemplated, nor is it by virtue of this commandment of St. Paul. There is another way proposed plainly in Scripture, which is quite consistent with worship in the church. It is in fact this—not by the

good retreating from the church, but by their making *them* withdraw from it. It is by their turning them out of it, by excommunication.

So much for the abuse of this text of St. Paul, and so unnecessary is it to forsake the church, in order to separate, as we ought to do, from the most wicked of mankind.

It has been objected, that the writers on the side of the establishment argue as if there were no Catholic church, or no church but our own. This is not true. There are many branches of the church of Christ besides ours. We may believe that, taken as a system, our church is purer than any other. We do not deny that many men may be saved even in societies not properly called the church, because we believe that God may have mercy on their ignorance and unbelief. Nor do we deny, that many may be lost in those which are so denominated. We contend, that there are rules proposed to us in Scripture, which all men are, in truth, bound to observe; and that in this country the episcopal protestant church is that society which has made the nearest approaches to the divine original, and is that which ought to be the society for the evangelizing of our own people.

It is observed again, that the visible church is defined by churchmen as a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure word of God is preached; and the sacraments be duly ministered, according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

This has been supposed an admission of the justification of dissenters and separatists: but it is no such thing. For 1. the visible church signifies a net which contains good and bad. 2. It does not assert that the word of God can be duly preached, or the sacraments administered, according to Christ's institution, by any but the episcopally ordained minister.

A part of Rom. xvi. 17, has been perverted to the justification of separation. It has been said, that the Church has compelled men to separate. The foregoing pages, I trust, sufficiently demonstrate, that so far from

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